LWF Office for Ecumenical Affairs

The ecumenical profile of Lutheran churches relating simultaneously to churches of episcopal and non-episcopal traditions

Presentations and relevant documents
from a consultation in
Geneva, 24 - 25 August 2000

Geneva 2001

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Preface

The present collection consists of papers developed in connection with a small exploratory consultation arranged by the LWF Office for Ecumenical Affairs in Geneva on 24 and 25 August 2000.

The papers were all presented on the first day of the meeting. On the second day, abbreviated versions were presented in the presence of the ecumenical participants. Papers by these ecumenical participants had not been requested. However, their comments to the Lutheran input and discussion was solicited.

The purpose of inviting ecumenical participants from the Anglican Communion and from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches was to promote ecumenical transparency and openness of communication with these Christian world communions in particular, regarding regional agreements of church fellowship that influence the ecumenical profile of the LWF. The WCC unit on Faith and Order was invited since it directs some of its attention to the issue of the coherence of various ecumenical dialogues and relations.

The consultation was deliberately inconclusive and open-ended. However, at the back of this collection of documents - after the main papers - short texts are added from some of the participants, reflecting their outlook on the consultation and on the road ahead. That group of documents begins with the letter of invitation to the ecumenical guests, which outlines some of the perspectives relevant to the meeting.

The continuation of the interdepartmental study program on "Lutheran Identity in Ecumenical Relationships" will pursue further the study of issues raised in the consultation. It will be directed on a day-to-day basis by a steering committee with representatives from the Institute for Ecumenical Research, Strasbourg, and the LWF Department for Theology and Studies, in addition to the LWF Office for Ecumenical Affairs where the program is lodged.

Reports on the progress of this program will be presented for discussion at the yearly joint meetings of the Program Committee for Theology and Studies and the Standing Committee on Ecumenical Affairs of the LWF Council.

Geneva, 5 October, 2000.

Sven Oppegaard
Assistant General Secretary
for Ecumenical Affairs

THE ECUMENICAL PROFILE OF LUTHERAN CHURCHES RELATING SIMULTANEOUSLY TO CHURCHES OF EPISCOPAL AND NON-EPISCOPAL TRADITIONS

Geneva, August 24-25, 2000

A G E N D A

Thursday, August 24

PART I – LUTHERAN PARTICIPANTS

09.00 – 12.30	Welcome and introduction	S. Oppegaard
	Report on discussions in the ELCA regarding the compatibility of agreements of church fellowship entered into simultaneously with Anglican and Reformed churches with particular reference to the historic episcopate.	R. Lee
	Report on discussions in the Church of Norway regarding the compatibility of agreements of church fellowship entered into simultaneously with Anglican and Reformed churches with particular reference to the historic episcopate.	O. Fykse Tveit
	The usefulness of the distinction between "esse" and "bene esse" with regard to the historic episcopate considered in the Lutheran tradition.	M. Mattox
12:30 – 14.00	Lunch in the Ecumenical Center	
14.00 – 17.00	Assessment of the issue at stake as a matter of ecumenical methodology.	A. Birmelé
	Perspectives regarding broader theological considerations of Lutheran identity.	K. Bloomquist
	Discussion	
19.00	Dinner at "Café de la Mairie" 48, Ancienne Route Grand Saconnex Tel: 798.70.98	

THE ECUMENICAL PROFILE OF LUTHERAN CHURCHES RELATING SIMULTANEOUSLY TO CHURCHES OF EPISCOPAL AND NON-EPISCOPAL TRADITIONS

Geneva, August 24-25, 2000

A G E N D A

Friday, 25 August

PART II – LUTHERAN PARTICIPANTS and PARTICIPANTS FROM THE ANGLICAN CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL, WARC and FAITH AND ORDER

09.00 – 12.00	Presentations by Lutheran participants. Short discussions after each presentation.
12.00 – 14:00	Lunch at ILO
14.00 – 17.00	General discussion: How might the LWF, on the basis of its confessional tradition, most adequately contribute in the time ahead to the understanding and practices related to the historic episcopate in the wider ecumenical context?

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Remarks on the LWF Study Project "Lutheran Identity in Ecumenical Relationships"

The Project

The interdepartmental study project on Lutheran Identity in Ecumenical Relationships was presented to the LWF Council in 1998. The Report to the Council from the Standing Committee for Ecumenical Affairs states:

> *This proposed study, presented to the Program Committee for Theology and Studies and the Standing Committee on Ecumenical Affairs in a joint meeting, was favorably received. The need was underlined for a study which focuses on issues arising in the ecumenical relations with which the Federation and member churches are involved, with the particular purpose of discussing their implications for Lutheran self-understanding. It was underlined that the aim of the study should not be to reflect on Lutheran identity* ***over against*** *that of others. It is intended to clarify questions of methodology and possible issues to be addressed during the coming years.*

The Council voted in 1998:

> *to encourage an inter-departmental / Strasbourg study project on "Lutheran Identity in Ecumenical Relationships," and to ask that a plan for implementation be submitted in 1999.*

For the 1999 Council meeting a Program Plan for this study was presented along with the Program Plans for all the other programs and activities related to the Office for Ecumenical Affairs (OEA). A three-year budget was approved as part of the three year Statement of Needs for the OEA. The project received high marks in the priority setting exercise which the LWF carried out 1998-1999.

The notion of the "historic episcopate"

In the various processes and discussions related to the "historic episcopate," various ways of re-writing the phenomenon itself has been attempted. It is true that the "reality" we are talking about is essentially a vague one, historically as well as theologically. It therefore makes good sense also to use other formulations such as the "office of bishops in historic succession." There are ways of describing and re-defining the terms, which can be helpful for more precise ways of understanding. Such contributions have played a role both in the Porvoo and the CCM processes.

The concept of the "historic episcopate" has, however, acquired a certain functionality, not because of an inherent clarity in the notion as such, but simply because of its acquired role in the ecumenical context. It is difficult, therefore, to avoid that terminology. But it is possible, and often necessary, in various situations to contribute specifications as required by the contexts. It seems obvious, in any case, that a substantial terminological discussion would be helpful at the outset of the present study.

The present meeting

The present meeting is an exploratory one, consisting of two days. *On the first day*, we shall hear contributions from the Lutheran participants, representing various points of entry into the theme (cf. agenda). It is my hope that after the meeting we shall be able to assemble some notes from the contributions presented on this day and possibly some reflections in hindsight. *On the second day*, we shall receive five visitors - two representing the Anglican Communion, two representing the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and one representing the Commission for Faith and Order. In the morning of this second day, the Lutheran participants will present short versions of their contributions and we shall receive reactions from our guests. The afternoon is set aside for discussion.

The need to clarify Lutheran identity in ecumenical relationships

Accountability:

The LWF has been, and is at present, a partner in global ecumenical dialogues with the Eastern Orthodox churches and the Roman Catholic Church. In addition we have international working groups with two dialogue partners, the Anglican Communion and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

Another former dialogue partner is the World Methodist Council. We have in addition carried out conversations with the Baptist World Alliance and the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference. The wide question is this: do we present a consistent, understandable profile in these different relationships?

We are not simply raising this question on our own initiative, but because questions are being put to us about the coherence of the varying positions and practices of the Lutheran churches around the world. Although we respect, and often encourage diversity within the Federation, some of the diversities within the Lutheran family lead to questions concerning our accountability as a global ecumenical partner.

Self-understanding:

There is also an expressed need in many of the LWF member churches for assistance as discussions related to self-understanding takes place in their own contexts. Such discussions arise in part from ecumenical developments. But they arise also from other areas of church life. This has caused the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD) also to undertake an "identity study." It will be important in the time ahead to have some communication between the DMD study and the present one.

Previous work:

Connections must be made to identity studies undertaken earlier by LWF or with LWF as a partner.[1] Valuable perspectives on the issue of *coherence* have also been developed by LWF hosted consultations[2] On the North American level the report of a consultation in Florida in 1993 was important for the simultaneous development of the Formula of Agreement and the Concordat.[3]

Concrete challenge:

Can we define comprehensive Lutheran positions on certain central issues, of which the "historic episcopate" is definitely one of the more difficult? The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification developed a global, differentiated, bilateral consensus. In that process a "differentiated consensus" was also formulated on the Lutheran side as such regarding the relevant topic. Can we once again develop and express Lutheran theological positions on a global level within the LWF? Can it be done in ways that do not lead to the level of conflict we had in the Joint Declaration process?

The "historic episcopate" in Lutheran context

The theme of the study has many facets, and various sub-themes have been considered. To study the meaning and significance of the "historic episcopate," or more precisely, the office of bishops in historic succession, is an important task today in the Lutheran context.

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[1] "The Identity of the Church and its Service ot the Whole Human Being. Final Report of a Study Process in Lutheran Churches." LWF Department of Studies, Geneva 1977.
"Lutheran Identity." Final Report of the Study Project: "The Identity of the Lutheran Churches in the Context of the Challenges of our Time." Institute for Ecumenical Research, Strasbourg, 1977.
"Ecumenical Relations of the LWF. Report of the Working Group on the Interrelations between the various bilateral dialogues." Received by the LWF Executive Committee 1977.

[2] "Communio and Dialogue: Compatibility – Convergence – Consensus. Ed. Eugene L. Brand. LWF 1992. *Leuenberg, Meissen, Porvoo.* Consultation between the churches of the Leuenberg Fellowship and the churches involved in the Meissen Agreement and the Porvoo Agreement. Liebfrauenberg 1995. Verlag Otto Lembeck 1996.

[3] *The Implications of Concordat of Agreement and A Common Calling.* The Report of a Consultation on "Full Communion", Florida 1993. ELCA 1993.

The issue arises out of the ecumenical agenda, as it remains a major matter of concern in the ecumenical relationships between the Lutheran communion and the Anglican Communion, the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox churches. At the same time, the issue is also a concern in the relationship between Lutherans and Reformed, since many of the LWF member churches have maintained, or are adopting, the office of bishops in historic succession. The tradition of such an office is a difficulty for many in the Reformed context.

Bishops in historic succession also represents a difficult issue within parts of the Lutheran family, both within member churches and in united churches. This needs to be recognized, and taken seriously, in the continued study and discussion of the matter on the theological, pastoral and ecumenical levels.

These things, taken together, constitute the background for the choice to focus on bishops in historic succession, as the first specific topic of the study of Lutheran Identity in Ecumenical Relationships. Let us look at the different aspects a little more closely:

As the processes leading to Porvoo and CCM have shown, some Lutheran churches that have not retained the office of bishops in historic succession through the Reformation have found it possible to gradually enter into it.

The ecumenical approach of these Lutheran churches has several facets. The following points are elements in the discussion:

A. The Lutheran reformers did not take distance from the role of bishops as such. At the time of the Reformation the bishops were obviously in historic succession. In a general way the Lutheran reformers took it for granted (as reflected in CA 28). Melanchthon supports it explicitly in the Apology.

B. This fact does not as such provide a decisive argument for the role of the "historic episcopate" in the Lutheran churches. History made it necessary for many churches of the Lutheran Reformation to establish other forms of ministerial oversight. This was not considered by the reformers to undermine the validity or legitimacy of preaching and administration of sacraments.

C. The Reformers did not consider the episcopate as a ministry distinct *iure divino* from that of the *ministerium ecclesiasticum* (CA 5). The difference between pastor and bishop in the Lutheran tradition is generally considered a difference in *levels* and not in *kind*. In ecumenical relations Lutherans have not presented particular forms of ministry as conditions for church fellowship.

D. The "historic episcopate" is already a reality firmly established in churches within the Lutheran communion. A continued development in the direction of adopting this tradition cannot take place only because other traditions require

it for unity. The adoption of this tradition by Lutheran churches must also be explained with other reasons and arguments. A discussion of such reasons is an important item on the Lutheran ecumenical agenda.

An important aspect of the Porvoo Agreement is that the "historic episcopate" is not treated as an isolated issue, but within the wider framework of the apostolic tradition of the Christian church. The ecumenical impact of this approach is an important matter for further exploration. This task is currently being worked on within the activity of the Strasbourg Institute. It should also be mentioned that the role of the ministry in the apostolicity of the church is currently being studied in detail in the framework of the Lutheran - Roman Catholic Commission on Unity. The present study must find ways to draw on the important resources that these projects represent.

From the point of view of the LWF the question is how this Federation, as Christian world communion, can present its position in a coherent way as an ecumenical partner in different bilateral dialogues and relations simultaneously. Can the regional agreements reached by Lutheran churches with both Anglicans and Reformed simultaneously, e.g. in USA and in Norway, contribute to a clarification process needed on the world level of Lutheranism?

On methodology

A clear procedure for the study is still to be developed. This must be done on the interdepartmental level. Many specific methodological questions arise. Here are some:

a) How can a Lutheran identity in ecumenical relationships be described in a *differentiated* way and still maintain the necessary *clarity*?
b) Is the challenge at hand *to provide theological / ecclesiological rationales* for the existing differentiated pattern within the Lutheran family, e.g. regarding models of ministry, presented in a coherent manner?
c) To what extent can the Lutheran profile be *explained deductively* on the basis of confessional writings and constitutive documents of member churches?
d) How would the use of an *inductive approach* present itself, taking specifically into consideration historical and cultural conditions for varying structures and practices in Lutheran churches?
e) How would *the impact of Lutheran positions adopted in binding ecumenical agreements* be considered and handled methodologically?
f) What would be the contribution of a specifically *comparative approach* with reference to differing ecclesiological systems and their underlying principles?
g) Can expositions of Lutheran identity in ecumenical relationships be presented in *language and terminology* that LWF member churches generally would be ready to recognize?
h) This project is now emerging at the same time as major *studies on ecumenical hermeneutics* are developing in Strasbourg as well as in VELKD. How can relevant connections are made?

i) What would be the *formal role of the LWF*, and particularly the *LWF Council*, in such a process. This question will need to be carefully considered in order to avoid unnecessary difficulties.

As we look ahead

The "historic episcopate" is an important ecumenical issue in the relationship between the LWF and several other ecumenical partners. As far as the office of bishop itself is concerned, some Lutheran churches that have not had this office have now acquired it. Also, some Lutheran churches that have not had bishops in historic succession are now in the process of acquiring this tradition. In certain contexts of Lutheranism, this area is as such very controversial.

As we look ahead, the following points seem to crystallize:

- The general situation calls for a study of the Lutheran views on the issue at hand, as an attempt to describe a differentiated, but coherent approach to it.
- The very notion of "Lutheran identity" in this context needs to be discussed. It is possible that other terms would be more helpful. But convincing alternatives have not yet been found.
- In studying the "historic episcopate" as an issue in the Lutheran tradition and in the Lutheran family, it will be important from the outset to study it with reference to the wider context of the apostolicity of the church.
- The present development in some of the Lutheran churches to adopt the office of bishops, and / or bishops in historic succession, should be accompanied by studies of related issues. Among such related issues are:
  - *The tasks and specific roles of bishops in the life of the church.* The Niagara Report has an important contribution to possible further clarification in this area, e.g. regarding the *administrative* responsibilities of bishops, as compared with his / her responsibilities in *pastoral oversight*?
  - *The role of laity (sensus fidelium and priesthood of all believers).* Does an increased emphasis on the ministry of bishops lead to a reduced focus on the role of the laity, or can this role be maintained and further developed at the same time?
  - *The ministry of bishops (in historic succession) in the framework of church governance.* In the Lutheran tradition, the role of church synods has been very important. How do bishops and the bishops' conferences appropirately interact with synodal structures of church governance? How does the authority of the bishops interact with the authority of synods, in matters of doctrine and ethics particularly?

If such related issues cannot be explicitly dealt with in the framework of the present study, there should nevertheless be indications in this study of their importance for the continued developments in the churches of the Lutheran communion.

- The project will deliberately be a slow one, and, as described in the Program Plan, does not envisage the publication of extensive reports. A few (lean) reports at certain intervals are envisaged, which would be presented to the LWF Council for its consideration through the Standing Committee for Ecumenical Affairs in consultation with the Program Committee for Theology and Studies.

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Ecumenical Vision of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Lutheran World Federation

The commitment to ecumenical engagement on the part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is articulated in its 1991 statement, "Ecumenism: The Vision of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America." That statement, adopted only four years after the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, builds on the self-identity of the church body which is contained in its constitution and bylaws. In those documents, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America asserts that it seeks in its faith and life "to manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives (ELCA constitution 4.02.f.).

In order to live out this commitment, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America understands itself "as a church that is evangelical, that is catholic, and that is ecumenical. Its confessional character is not opposed to its ecumenical commitment, but necessitates it as a consequence of the Gospel" ("Vision," p. 9). This commitment is far-reaching and is not confined to any one set of churches or traditions. The "Vision" statement goes on to say, "This church is bold to reach out in several directions simultaneously to all those with whom it may find agreement in the Gospel" ("Vision," p. 11). In making such a statement, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America seeks to signal the importance of agreement in the doctrines of the faith as the foundation for any ecumenical agreement. At the same time, the statement makes clear that there is no assumption on the part of the ELCA that it will discern, by the power of the Holy Spirit, such agreement in the Gospel in a particular denomination or faith tradition, nor does it assume that past conflicts between faith traditions should pre-determine its present and future theological reflection and missiological action.

Definition of Full Communion

As understood in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the relationship of full communion encompasses all that Lutherans have understood by the phrase, "altar and pulpit fellowship," and more. As a visible and sacramental reality, the relationship of full communion points to God's future that is coming to meet us upon the arrival of the kingdom of God at the parousia of Jesus Christ. This relationship is characterized by the following six marks:

1. a common confession of the Christian faith;
2. a mutual recognition of Baptism and a sharing of the Lord's Supper, allowing for joint worship and an exchangeability of members;

3. a mutual recognition and availability of ordained ministers to the service of all members of churches in full communion, subject only but always to the disciplinary regulations of the other churches;
4. a common commitment to evangelism, witness, and service;
5. a means of common decision making on critical common issues of faith and life; and
6. a mutual lifting of any condemnations that exist between churches.

Some of these marks of full communion may well be established prior to the establishment of the relationship of full communion. As an example, Lutherans and Episcopalians declared interim eucharistic sharing in 1982 which recognized at that time a common confession of the faith, a recognition of Baptism, and the sharing of the Lord's Supper. Similarly, Lutherans and Anglican have never issued condemnations against each other's churches.

Clearly, it is not possible for churches to move immediately from a fractured disunity to full communion. A number of stages serve as milestones along the road toward this relationship. Initially the churches are engaged together in various forms of ecumenical cooperation, often through conciliar bodies or local associations of churches. The second stage of engagement occurs when the church bodies begin formal bilateral or multilateral dialogues. Based on a common confession of the Triune God, the purpose of the dialogues is to come to an agreement on the full range of doctrinal issues that is required before a relationship of full communion can be established. The penultimate stage leading to full communion involves preliminary recognition in which eucharistic sharing occurs on a church-to-church basis, but without the mutual availability of ordained ministers. The 1982 arrangements of interim eucharistic sharing between Lutherans and Episcopalians in North America is a primary example of this stage in the relationship. What follows is the establishment of the relationship of full communion.

Declarations of Full Communion by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

In 1997 the biennial Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America considered two proposal for establishing a relationship of full communion. *A Formula of Agreement* is a carefully crafted proposal to establish such a relationship with three of the Reformed family of churches in North America-the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ. Altar and pulpit fellowship with these churches had been declared by two of the three predecessor church bodies that united to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 1988. Because not all three church bodies had agreed, the matter was deferred until sufficient study had been conducted in the ELCA. Drawing heavily on the Leunenberg Agreement in Europe, *A Formula of Agreement* outlines in significant detail doctrinal agreements in Christology and concerning the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. It also outlines a principle for "mutual admonition and affirmation" that will guide future doctrinal and ethical conversations between the participating churches. The proposal received the requisite two-thirds approval from the ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

The 1997 Churchwide Assembly also considered the *Concordat of Agreement*, a proposal for a relationship of full communion with The Episcopal Church. The agreement in the doctrine of the faith was articulated by drawing on the Niagara Report, which contains a lengthy description of the shared faith commitment of the two traditions. The agreement also specified that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America would agree to enter the historic succession of bishops by including in the laying-on-of-hands at the installation of future bishops three bishops from the Anglican tradition and three bishops from the Lutheran tradition who had already been incorporated into the historic succession. The proposal fell six votes short of adoption by the Churchwide Assembly. The assembly then proceeded to direct that a revision of the proposal be prepared for discussion and possible adoption by the 1999 Churchwide Assembly.

The revised proposal was titled, "Called to Common Mission: A Lutheran Revision of the *Concordat of Agreement*." Essentially the same in content, "Called to Common Mission" simplified the procedures by which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America would enter the historic succession of bishops. It was adopted by more than the two-thirds vote required. The debate about this proposal for a relationship of full communion centered on the Anglican requirement that for them fellowship could be declared only with church bodies who had bishops in historic succession. Questions were raised about whether this Anglican requirement in essence violated the provision of Article VII of the Augsburg Confession which says, "For the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments."

The 1999 ELCA Churchwide Assembly also considered and approved a relationship of full communion with the Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church in America as outlined in the document, "Following Our Shepherd to Full Communion." Very different in tone, this proposal draws on the hymnic traditions of both churches to articulate the common confession of the faith. The Moravian Church also subscribes to the Augsburg Confession. The Moravian Church also enjoys a ministry of spiritual episcope centered in the office of bishop, but a bishop without a geographical jurisdiction. This tradition can be traced to the 16th century in Bohemia, prompting discussion between the Moravians and the Anglican tradition on whether these bishops are a part of the historic succession of bishops.

A variety of relationships?

How is it possible for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to enter three such different forms of a relationship of full communion? The ELCA "Vision" statement makes the following assertion:

> Agreement in the Gospel can be reached and stated without adopting Lutheran Confessional formulations as such. It allows for flexible, situation-oriented decisions about order and decision making structures. It does not demand organic union, although it does not rule it out ("Vision," p. 14).

A Formula of Agreement stands as a significant example that agreement in the doctrine of the faith can be reached without using unique Lutheran vocabulary to confess the faith of the Church. "Called to Common Mission" rests on the assumption that Lutherans are free to adopt any form of church order as long as such ordering does not violate the commitment to the right teaching of the Gospel and the proper administration of the sacraments. To those who assert that Article VII of the Augsburg Confession has been compromised because another requirement has been added to the marks of the Church, namely the historic episcopate, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America responds that such is not the case. If Lutherans were suggesting that the historic succession of bishops is required for the unity of the Church, it would not be possible for the ELCA to enter into an agreement with the Reformed family of churches that includes the exchangeability of clergy in a tradition that does not make use of the ministry of bishops. Rather, the agreement by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to enter the historic succession of bishops is to accommodate, for the sake of the greater unity of Christ's Church, the requirements of another tradition that considers such succession a necessary sign of the apostolicity and catholicity of the Church. Similarly those in the Reformed tradition need not fear that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will withdraw from its full communion relationship with them as more bishops enter the historic succession. The ELCA's Confessional commitments preclude this possibility.

At the heart of all three of these relationships of full communion, however, is the commitment to fostering the mission of the Church. These agreements are entered into not only to further the sign of the Church's unity, but to enhance the Church's witness to the good news of God in Jesus Christ. The exchangeability of clergy and the sharing of the sacramental life of the Church made possible by these agreements opens up new opportunities for ministry, some of which had never before been imagined. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is humbled by the opportunities placed before it at the dawn of the third Christian millennium. It enters into this future confident of the working of God's Holy Spirit and excited by the new horizons it faces.

Olav Fykse Tveit
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What and Who Define our Profile?

A short presentation of reflections in The Church of Norway on compatibility of the agreements with the Anglican and Reformed churches - with particular reference to the historic episcopate

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Background

My reflections here are based upon the decisions of the General Synod of The Church of Norway (CoN), and the premises given in the presentation of the proposed Agreements for the Synod. The Theological Commission under the Council of Ecumenical Affairs and The Bishops Conference presented these premises to the Synod. They relay upon the result of a hearing in the diocesan councils, the theological faculties and some others.

Let me start 50 years ago. The CoN was, together with other Nordic Lutheran churches - invited to discuss inter-communion with Church of England in the early fifties. Bishop Berggrav of Oslo, for some known for his leadership in the establishment of the WCC, concluded that, the CoN could not accept any agreement with the Anglicans that implied any doubt in regard of the apostolicity of our church. A step towards ecumenical fellowship could not be conducted as an "in-validation" of the ordained ministry in our church. This conclusion did not ignore that the conversations had documented how much our churches had in common theologically and historically (besides what our nations, particularly at that time, had together). The answer from Berggrav was based on a reference to the nearly 1000 years of the church in Norway, including a practice of bishops being ordained by bishops and the practice of episcopal ordinations. The answer also meant that a disapproval of the ordinations of Lutheran bishops by Bugenhagen was out of question.

The question of apostolic legitimacy of the Bishops and the ordained ministers of the CoN had also been a burning issue just a few years before, in the struggle of the church during the Second World War. The vast majority of the ordained pastors and bishops laid down their ministry ("Embete"), as a commission given by the state, but not as an authority and calling given in their ordination (1942). The nazi-loyal government in Norway denied the legitimacy of their ministry after that. The document `The Foundation of the Church` (1942) claimed the full legitimacy and authority of those ordained in an apostolic way/according to the apostolic tradition ("på apostolisk vis"). For the church in opposition to the Nazis it was a matter of legitimating the ministry beyond the positive law ("den positive rett"). The Nazi-loyal government appointed substitutes for most of the bishops, and even tried - without success - to have them ordained in "the apostolic succession" by a bishop from abroad. That would, of course,

not have helped to legitimize them as "rite vocatus". Seen at this background, any agreement with the Church of England could by no means be accepted if it questioned the ordained ministers of CoN.

The first comprehensive confessional dialogue, in which the CoN participated, was the conversations leading to the Leuenberg Agreement (1973). The Bishop's conference by and large accepted it as "sufficient for altar- and pulpit fellowship", but took no action to sign it. There was a noticeable theological protest against the "Protestant unionist profile" of the agreement from some theologians, but not directed towards the issue of the ministry of bishops or the historical episcopate. The reason for not signing was said to be a reluctance to let the State Ministry of Church Affairs sign a theological agreement. There was more or less no Reformed presence in Norway, either. The decision of signing was done at the General Synod November 1999, after two-three years of reconsideration of the matter in the CoN.

The first agreement to be signed and put into practice was the Porvoo agreement (ratified 1994, signed 1996) with Anglican churches. The most critical voices against that endeavor asked whether this would mean a fortification of the Bishop's ministry, changing the focus from the basic ministry of the pastors, and a reduction of the influence of the Synodical structure. It was also asked whether this was an acceptance of a "necessity" of bishops and historical succession beyond – or even against - the Lutheran confession of our church. The signing was done on the premise that these questions were answered in a basically sound way.

One year later, 1995, a parallel agreement was signed with the Methodist Church in Norway ("Fellowship of Grace"). The importance of *episkopé*, conducted by bishops, was confirmed at that time. When the proposal to sign the Leuenberg agreement was put forward, the theme of compatibility to other ecumenical relations was raised with some force, i.e. through consultations with other Nordic Lutheran churches. The internal debate in our church was not very loud or strong, but enough to find it appropriate to make a statement explaining what the signing of the L.A. meant in that regard. The address for that statement was not at least the other Nordic Lutheran churches and the Anglican churches that have signed the Porvoo agreement.

The arguments for signing the Porvoo as well as the Leuenberg agreement have been based on the 7th article of The Augsburg Confession (CA 7). *These agreements have brought our church into inter-confessional church fellowship on the basis of our confessional definition of unity.* First of all and most of all the issue of compatibility has been raised in regard of our basis in Scripture and confession (the Creeds of the Early Church, the Augsburg Confession and Luther's Smaller Catechism), not as much in regard of the relation to episcopal or non-episcopal churches. The approval of the agreements has been made on the premise that they in a proper way express what is sufficient for unity in the Church according to CA 7. And if that can be said together with Anglican, Methodist and Reformed churches, the consequences of that for church fellowship can and should be taken. These agreements have not been regarded as causing problems for the *communio* we after 1990 have with other Lutheran churches, but rather as decisions made on the recommendation of this fellowship of the LWF. Not to forget, "non-episcopal churches" still means, to some extent, Lutheran churches.

Statements of Church of Norway Regarding The Historical Episcopate

Although the problem of this consultation has not been a heavily debated issue within our church, the reception processes of the Porvoo and Leuenberg agreements have given a picture of how the historical episcopate is regarded at the moment in our church.[1]

a) The Synod regarded the historic episcopate as a sign and tool for the continuity and the unity of the Church. Not as an isolated matter, but as one aspect of the apostolicity of the Church. The Synod explicitly said in the approval of Porvoo that if the churches involved (i.e. the Anglican churches) can accept the comprehensive understanding of *the apostolicity* of the Church and *apostolic succession* in the Porvoo report, then there is a basis for church fellowship. The *apostolicity* of the church is manifested in the church when the church is faithful to the apostolic faith and the apostolic calling. It is manifested in the intention to be apostolic in faith and life, sent by Christ to the world. *Apostolic succession* is accepted as necessary for the Church, in the sense of BEM and Porvoo §39: "Thus the primary manifestation of apostolic succession is to be found in the apostolic tradition of the Church as a whole." This is understood being in accordance with, or, if you may, compatible with the line from CA.

b) Very important for the acceptance of the Porvoo agreement was that the following statement: "The mutual acknowledgement of our churches and ministries is theologically prior to the use of the sign of the laying on of hands in the historic succession." (Porvoo § 53). This was in the hearings understood as a sufficient recognition of our ministries in the past as being in "apostolic continuity" (cf. P §52, the end). Secondly, and quite remarkably, in the reception process there were more references to the 1000 years of the church in Norway, and – in practice – an episcopal succession in Norway, than references to the so called break in this succession in the time of Reformation. A Professor of Theology argued in the Synod 1994 (with wide consent) that the CoN had historical succession before any Anglican bishop participated in Norwegian bishop consecrations, due to the apostolic succession in dogma and the practice of our consecrations of bishops. He argued that without making a big "theologoumenon" of it, the practice in the CoN to have a new bishop consecrated by a bishop, and pastors ordained by bishops (or deans as acting bishops) has deliberately been an important sign of apostolic legitimacy.

c) You may ask then, what has the CoN "embraced" (Porvoo §52f) by this step? The Anglican acknowledgement of the historical Episcopal sees and our practice of consecrations as signs of intention to be an apostolic church were welcomed, but not made a matter of discussion in our church. On the other hand, the Synod did accept the theological qualification of what has been the practice of our church, and accepted the historical episcopate as it has been maintained in the Anglican churches as an important sign of continuity. Likewise, in the perspective of ecumenical commitment it was not problematic to regard the participation of

[1] Something is said in the documents that have been ratified, something is said in the dialogue documents documenting the basis for the agreements, and something is said in the process of reception. It's not quite at the same level. I'll try to make sufficient distinctions when required for the understanding.

> Anglican bishops in our consecrations of bishops as enriching, showing our unity with them now. Thus, what is new is a higher degree of theological awareness and appreciation of the historic episcopate as a sign of continuity and unity in the Church. We now normally invite bishops from churches which have maintained the historical episcopate to the consecrations of our bishops (but also representatives from other churches!). Besides that, it has been opened a door to a full sacramental fellowship with Anglican churches.

Nevertheless, there were, and still are, some question marks left in the margin, concerning our present status in regard of the theological significance of the historic episcopate. The Porvoo document says that our church is among those who are "free to recognize the value of the sign and should embrace it without denying their own apostolic continuity". One interpretation of the entire Porvoo document had been that it "de-theologizes" the historical episcopate, regarding it no longer as "a not necessary theological construction to claim the apostolicity of the Church."[2] The Synod did not say that in the same way, but focused on the wider framework in which the issue has been settled. Nevertheless, there is still something more to reflect upon in this theology of "signs". What theological status has the historical development in some of the churches been granted thereby, and what about the theology of the history of non-episcopal churches? How "free" are we "not to use the sign" in our relations to other churches? Such questions should be raised in the common Lutheran study of these issues.

The Question of Compatibility between Ecumenical Agreements

The Synod stated explicitly – in the ratification of the Leuenberg Agreement 1999: "In all our churches there are forms of pastoral oversight ("episkopé"). Such a function is necessary in all churches. The concrete structure and understanding of such a ministry of oversight may, however, vary." That means that the Synod does regard the signing of the Porvoo agreement as a confirmation of the need for episkope and the adequacy of a theological basis for the ministry of bishops and a confirmation of their succession as sign of unity and continuity in the Church. It also says that one particular form of episkopé is not a precondition for the Church, or for church unity, seen in the perspective of CA 7. Further, it means that the CoN accepts that Reformed churches of the Leuenberg church fellowship are recognized as having structures of episkope, even if they are presbyteral and/or synodical. This is a statement that obviously addresses the question of compatibility between agreements with episcopal and non-episcopal churches.

Already in 1994, the Synod said explicitly that the Porvoo agreement does not complicate our relations to non-episcopal Lutheran churches. Hence the communio of the LWF did play a role as hermeneutical framework. It was also important for the CoN that the LWF had encouraged agreements of church fellowship with Reformed as well as Anglican churches (Curitiba, 1990).

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[2] As it was said in the hearing responses from two theological institutions in Norway, The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology and The Faculty of Theology, Oslo University.

A Compatible Profile in the Statements of the Church of Norway?

Summing up the Synod's decisions in 1994, 1995 (the agreement with the Methodist church) and 1999 concerning the historical episcopate, I would like to emphasize that the decisions have been made in accountability to our understanding of the basis of the Church and its unity, given in Scripture and in our confessions.

To be more specific, it is done in accountability to:

- Our history as apostolic church with an apostolic ministry with Word and sacrament, including doctrinal profile given through the Lutheran Reformation of our church;
- The calling and commitment to seek church fellowship with other churches where it is possible according to that basis;
- The task of reconciliation of the manifold and complicated landscape of confessional churches in Northern Europe (it is not only dogmatic issues behind the divisions of these churches);
- The agreement with the Anglicans that the ministry of episkope and the episcopal consecrations of bishops are visible signs of continuity and unity in the Church;
- The call to learn from and share gifts with other churches.

These decisions are not made to be diplomatic correct, but to take the call to community in our doctrinal basis into account in a specific challenge in our time. That is true in regard of the agreement with the Anglicans, with the Methodists and with the Reformed/united churches of Europe.

As far as the theme of historic episcopate has been explicitly or implicitly addressed in the discussions, there seems to be a far-reaching common understanding in our church. It might be summed up like this:

1. The CoN – and other churches sharing the apostolic tradition in Word and Sacraments – are apostolic churches before common consecrations of bishops (with Anglicans).
2. The historic episcopal succession is accepted as a sign of continuity and unity of the apostolic Church. It is by intention and by practice in our church before the signing of the Porvoo agreement. It should be practiced in a more comprehensive, ecumenically significant and theologically reflected way after that.
3. Whether a pastor is legitimately ordained before participation of Anglican bishops in consecrations of bishops, is regarded as a not relevant question of the legitimacy of the pastor.
4. The agreements with Methodist and Reformed churches do confirm that having historical episcopal succession in the classical Anglican meaning is *no condition* for church fellowship. The basis for "church fellowship" is understood according to CA7 as agreement in the use and understanding of the Gospel and the sacraments. The Porvoo agreement shows that the CoN accepts that the historical episcopal succession is an *important sign, but not a condition,* for the manifestation of church fellowship. Or in other words, that there is a necessary *distinction between what is necessary* for the being of the Church and its unity, *and what is important* for the manifestation of the unity and the life of the Church.

Thus, it is neither the demands from episcopal churches nor critical questions from non-episcopal churches that has defined our profile in this regard. But it is an encounter with these brothers and sisters and an attempt to be – together with them -faithful to an ecumenical understanding of what it means to be an apostolic church.

Our history as the Church of Norway (the Reformation, the struggle in the World War II) teaches us that the reverence for historical continuity should be conducted in a dialectic relation to openness for proper critique. That means, indeed, that we have something to learn from others also in regard of how the unity of the church can be made visible.

Together with other Lutheran (and other) churches, our church should be involved in this study to explore further the Lutheran profile in regard of the historical episcopate. I think it is important to discuss the theological impact of this issue in a wider perspective than the potential accept of our ordained ministry by the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches. What are really the main theological problems involved? As far as I can see, it is: a. The theological meaning of the historical development of church structures, which is a difficult issue in Lutheran theology. b. The question of legitimacy and authenticity of the churches. c. The question of power in inter-church relationship; who has the upper hand? d. The visibility of unity. e. The aspect of accountability in inter-church relationships.

I think, personally, that the best way The Church of Norway can serve the ecumenical movement in Europe for the moment was to ratify all three agreements of church fellowship. There is a real danger that the European churches are divided into new blocks. Maybe not only arguments, but also actions of belief in compatibility are appropriate in this situation?

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Brief Reflections on the Distinction Between *esse* and *bene esse* in the Lutheran Debate on Episcopacy

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My purpose in what follows is to assess the theological utility of the distinction between the *esse* of the church and its *bene esse* in the context of the oft-heated discussion among Lutherans regarding the historic episcopacy in the Lutheran understanding of the church. As I understand the two terms, the former denotes the reality of the church as that which it is, the latter its well being beyond the minimum conditions necessary for its existence. Sometimes the term *plene esse* is also used, which seems to denote everything in the first two terms, plus that something extra necessary to make a thing everything it could or should be. Regarding the utility of these terms in the discussion of episcopacy, I want to give both a yes and a no answer. Yes, I think, this distinction is a helpful and sensible one, particularly when applied to general issues of Christian identity. No, it is not particularly helpful when used to develop a comparative analysis of Christian essences, putting episcopacy here, justification there, and so on. Such strategies are not helpful in terms of comparative ecclesiology, I think, and function a little too neatly in tandem with a closed sense of confessional identity. The either-or distinction between the church's *esse* and her *bene esse*, though helpful in many ways, simply cannot bear the ecclesiological freight of an in-depth consideration of church and ministry.

A Hard-Working Distinction

After only a brief investigation into the theological use of this distinction, I learned that these little Latin words have been applied to an interesting variety of theological problems. Most poignantly, Pope Paul VI employed the distinction in an attempt to make sense of the church's engagement with communism. According to Thomas A. Shannon, in his relationship with communist governments "...Paul had a three fold goal: *esse*: the right of the Church to exist; *bene esse*, the right of the church to name bishops, educate children and build churches; and *plene esse*, the full freedom of the Church to exercise the entirety of its mission."[1] The most interesting twist, on the other hand, was Roman Catholic theologian James Burtchaell's claim that the ministry of the church belongs to the *esse* but not to the *bene esse* of the church.[2] The spiritual vitality of the church comes not from the priest who presides at the Eucharist—preside though he must—but from Christians like Mother Theresa who make the love of Christ present as they pour out their lives in the ministry of service. There is something to learn, I think, from both these examples.

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[1] See his unpublished "Roman Catholic Social Thought: Historical, Methodological, and Analytic Perspectives," Collegium Colloquy on Faith and Intellectual Life, Saint John's University, Collegeville, MN, June 21, 2000.

[2] See his *From Synagogue to Church*, (Cambridge, 1992).

In addition, there is what I would describe as a broadly ecumenical use of the distinction that seems to me benign, viz., as a tool for discerning whether an "other" religious community has enough of what is generally associated with Christian communities to justify labeling it, too, identifiably Christian, an identification which implies mutual recognition. Understood as a lens through which to judge general questions of Christian identity, the distinction between *esse* and *bene esse* is helpful indeed. Given that this or that church lacks this or that element, may we still recognize it as a *Christian* church? All Christians do this nearly all the time, and there is no reason they shouldn't.

My concern here, however, is not the use of this distinction in understanding the relationship of the church to the world, or the churches' initial recognition of one another as identifiably Christian. Instead, I aim better to understand how the distinction assists churches in developing their own self-understanding, particularly with regard to the issue of episcopal ministry. How useful is it for churches to identify parts of their tradition as belonging to their *esse*, other parts only to their *bene esse*? In this regard, the distinction is used in at least two different ways. Sometimes those who describe something as the belonging to the *esse* of the church seem to mean that it is the single reality that makes a person or a community Christian, the *essence*, in other words, of Christianity. Not surprisingly, for example, some Protestants seem to argue that the doctrine of justification by faith constitutes the *esse* of the church. Where this element is intact within an individual or a community, there the bare essentials of the Christian faith may reliably be judged to be present, in spite of whatever other distortions or *lacunae* one may find.

More often, however, the distinction is used not to isolate the one reality that constitutes the essence of the faith, but to achieve conceptual clarity about a complex of realities that presumably belong to the substance of the faith, and to distinguish these from such other elements as may adorn a faith already complete in its essentials. Here the arguments have to do with whether particular doctrines or realities should be considered part of the *esse* of the faith. There is no shortage of candidates. Some Protestants, e.g., Francis Turretin, have argued that the authority of Scripture is essential not just to the well being of the church, but to its being church at all. Scripture, therefore, should be considered part of the *esse* of the Christian faith. Take away a reliable Bible, so the argument goes, and what have you got left? Scripture, on this account, is one of the essential elements by which the church stands or falls. Roman Catholics, on the other hand, have been inclined to insist that the episcopal office belongs to the *esse* of the church. No bishops, no church. Poised midway between Rome and Wittenberg, Anglicans have argued heatedly about this issue, which, one suspects, says a great deal about the connections between this issue and their sense of self-identity as a catholic church in which the apostolic succession has been preserved. Along similar lines, at least one commentator has noted that the "Gift of Authority" seems to claim that primacy is part of the *esse* of the church, and not just the *bene esse*.

Whether one uses this distinction to isolate the one reality or those several realities constitutive of the church, the clear intention is to discern the church's essence. Stripped to the bare bones, so to speak, what is the church? Helpful as it may be to attempt to think clearly about what is most important, essentialist analysis of this type nevertheless strikes me a bit like a jeweler removing one pearl at a time from a necklace, in each case asking herself whether what remains is still saleable as a necklace. Take away this. Take away that. Do you still have the Christian church? Understood as a tool used to achieve a critical reduction of Christianity to its fundamentals, the distinction between *esse* and *bene*

esse strikes me as less than helpful, particularly when it comes to the matter of constructing a Christian doctrine of church and ministry. It smacks of an excessively deductive and rationalistic theological foundationalism that attends far too little to the concrete historic shape of the church and its ministry.

The Lutheran *satis est*

The Lutheran confessional writings do not fully develop a Lutheran doctrine of the church. In its reception of the catholic creeds, of course, the Lutheran movement accepted the notion that the church is "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic." In the confessional writings themselves, however, what is said about the church, like what is said about the Trinity or about the union of the two natures in the one person of Christ, is set in the context of vigorous disagreement with the church of Rome over issues related to grace, faith, and salvation. The church is *an* issue, in other words, but it is not *the* issue.

The best-known confessional pronouncements on the church are likely familiar to us all. Article V of the Augsburg Confession (CA) asserts that the "ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments" is divinely instituted, that this ministry is the divinely determined means, in other words, through which the Holy Spirit "works faith... in those who hear the Gospel." Article VII defines the church as "the assembly of all believers [saints]" in which the Gospel is faithfully taught and the sacraments faithfully administered. Agreement in the divinely determined duties of the office of ministry therefore suffices (*satis est/dies ist gnug*) for the "true unity of the church." Article XIV adds to this focus on a divinely instituted ministry of Word and sacrament the notion that in a church rightly ordered "nobody should preach publicly... or administer the sacraments unless he [sic] is regularly called [*nisi rite vocatus/ohn ordentlichen Beruf*]." It is essential to note, however, that the *satis est* and the insistence on a rightly ordered public ministry were intended by the confessors not to announce a new ecclesiology *in nuce*, but only to insist that in spite of their unilateral reform of certain other church practices (those associated with "works righteousness"), they had done nothing to set themselves outside the sphere of the catholic church. Whatever ecclesiology is implicit in the CA, in other words, it assumes as its living context the rich complex of *practices* traditionally associated with the western catholic church, including that of episcopal oversight.

Viewed through an essentialist lens, however, and removed from their context in late medieval Christendom, the ecclesiological elements in the CA have suggested to many Lutherans a minimalist approach to the church, i.e., an approach that insists that agreement in Gospel and sacraments *alone* should suffice for the unity of the church. Of course, figuring out exactly what agreement in the Gospel and the sacraments might *mean* is itself no easy task. Most importantly for our purposes, however, the ecclesiological minimalism so many find in the CA (what Michael Root labels "*satis est* reductionism") suggests the corollary that differing essentialist analyses of the fundamentals of the faith will ultimately produce mutually incompatible "varieties" of Christianity. Essentialism meets genetic pseudo-science in the claim that this or that element constitutes the DNA of this or that Christian community. Moreover, the insistence that churches agree about matters not considered a part of their genetic identity in order to achieve full, visible unity will result in predictable cries of protest from Lutherans who take a minimalist approach to ecclesiology, largely on grounds that such agreement would seem to add something to

those elements which alone constitute the essence of things ecclesial: Gospel and sacraments. Where one finds different understandings of the *esse* of the church, there one also finds fundamental and therefore irresolvable differences in the faith. Seen in this light, the distinction between *esse* and *bene esse* is connected to the fortress mentality of hyper-confessionalism.

Focus on Reform

The original target of the Lutheran insistence that agreement in Gospel and sacraments suffices for the true unity of the church was not the order and structure of the late medieval church *per se*. To be sure, Lutheranism did attack aspects of then-prevailing theories of the church's order and structure. The Schmalkald Articles, for example, sharply reject the notion that the bishop of Rome rules the church by "divine right." The related notion that "no Christian can be saved unless he is obedient to the pope" is rejected on grounds that it conflicts with the "chief article" of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. (SA II.4)

At the same time, however, Luther offers an idyllic picture of the ideal church, governed by a *collegium* of bishops who are "equal in office" and "joined together in unity of doctrine, faith, sacraments, prayer, works of love, etc." In CA XXVIII, moreover, Melanchthon grounds the "power of bishops" in the "power or command of God to preach the Gospel, to remit and retain sins, and administer the sacraments." Adding to this list the duties of judging doctrine and excommunicating from the church those guilty of "wicked conduct," Melanchthon insists that the bishops have these powers "by divine right" (*de iure divino*). The papacy, he allows, may be accepted, so long as 1) the bishops cease terrorizing evangelical ministers and, 2) the papacy itself is understood to exist by human right (*de iure humano*), and not divine. In addition, the Apology of the CA also admits that ordination may be called a sacrament, on the explicit grounds that "the ministry of the Word has God's command and glorious promises" (AP XIII.11). The emphasis of the confessions, in other words, falls on reform, not rejection, of the church's structure and order as it existed in the sixteenth century. Even if they tend to collapse pastoral and episcopal ministry alike into the one office of the ministry, both Luther and Melanchthon recognized oversight as an essential task grounded in the *ius divinum*, God's gracious will for the church.[3]

If one is inclined to attempt an essentialist account of the church on the basis of this brief confessional review, then the ministry of the Gospel and the sacraments, including duties that may rightly be divided between pastoral ministry and a ministry of oversight, is clearly part of what the church is, its *esse*. Where there is a church, there someone must be proclaiming the Gospel and applying the grace of Christ by means of the sacraments. And there, in solidarity with the company of pastors, someone must also be governing the church in the power of the Gospel, judging true and false doctrine (including that of the pastors!), excommunicating those guilty of public wickedness, in short, exercising evangelical *episkopé*.

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[3] The Lutheran churches have rarely been without a ministry of oversight, even if in its ministerial essentials it differs little from the pastoral office. On this issue, see Bernhard Lohse, "The Development of the Offices of Leadership in the German Lutheran Churches: 1517-1918," in *Episcopacy in the Lutheran Church? Studies in the Development and Definition of the Office of Church Leadership*, ed. Ivar Asheim and Victor R. Gold, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 51-71.

Givens, and Historical Givens

If the Lutheran Confessions consider *episkopé* an aspect of the divinely given office of the ministry, they accept episcopal structure, including in theory the papal office, only as an historical given. As an historical development, it is hard to see how episcopal structure could be considered necessary to the church, part of its *esse*; if the office of the ministry rests on the Gospel of Christ as a *mandatum divinum*, the episcopal office seems to rest only on the vagaries of history. For some this means that episcopacy is an *adiaphoron*. It could have been otherwise. Episcopacy is useful, so the thinking goes, but dispensable.[4]

This suggests to me that the conceptual problem lurking behind the drive toward an essentialist account of the church is the problem of faith and history. To paint with a broad brush, powerful forces released in the modern era—of which the Reformation is a part—posed the question of the contingent historical development of the church in new and seemingly debilitating ways. One solution, an option still very much alive by the way, is to follow the traditions of Protestant liberalism in isolating a religious core, an essence of "Christianity" along the lines of the great Adolph von Harnack. Historical science applied to the evidence of the New Testament and early Christian sources became in Harnack's hands the means by which to sift away the impermanent flux and change of history and leave behind the precious ore of the authentic teaching of Jesus. Something of this effort still lives and breathes, if I understand it aright, in the work of New Testament scholar Marcus Borg, who strips away the false accretions of history in order to recover a new-age sage who can speak to us postmoderns. Looking down the well of history, the most pious historians always find a Jesus in whom to invest their own religious sensibilities.

No matter how one looks at it, the answer seems to be the same. If the episcopal office itself is a historically contingent development, and if historical contingency means that "it ain't necessarily so," then episcopacy, as something that could just as well have been otherwise, by definition falls outside the *esse* of the church. Problem is, pretty much the same thing could be said for the church's traditions of worship, for the development of a canon of Scripture, an authoritative dogma of God and Christ, for the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist, even for the earliest traditions embedded in the New Testament stories of Jesus from which we Lutherans claim to derive our distinctive notions about the Christian Gospel. Harnack's heroic efforts notwithstanding, there is no a-historical core of Christianity; the acids of historicism threaten ever and again to eat away the sureties of faith. Historical science can no more save the essences for us than it could for Harnack.

Helpful as it can be, then, the search for the *esse* of the Lutheran tradition, and the attempt to see if we can allow the historic episcopacy a little room alongside it, creates more problems than it solves. The notion that we must reject the historic episcopacy (or, for that matter, that we can accept it) on grounds that it does not belong to the essence of what

[4] Nearly everyone these days admits that the episcopal structure of the church did not drop down out of the sky, but developed within the church at a fairly early date. Whereas the Council of Trent spoke of episcopacy as existing by the ordination of God (*divina ordinatione*), the Second Vatican Council sees the distinction between priests and bishops as one that "has existed from antiquity (*ab antiquo*)." Moreover, the "Catholic tradition also speaks of only one single sacrament of orders, in which bishop, priest and deacon share in different ways." "The Ministry in the Church (1981)," paragraph 48. (Growth in Agreement, 264.) Cf. Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, No. 25.

we are all about as Lutherans strikes me as a poor way of thinking about confessional identity, one that belongs to a bygone age. Confessional essences are a last modernist refuge from historicism. They are connected by more than historical accident, moreover, with idealist theologies that attempt to spin out the whole of Christian thought based on fundamental ideas or principles. In this case, the attempt would be to spin out a doctrine of the church based on the non-historically conditioned first principles of the essence of Lutheranism, i.e., agreement in Gospel and sacraments.

A better answer, at least as it seems to me, is to recognize from the outset that no aspect of the Christian faith—neither the message of the Gospel, nor the sacraments themselves, and certainly not the order of the church—is unconditioned by time. The mystery of the church, then, is precisely the mystery of the Word, made flesh. The Word of God is never alone, but comes to us, first and last, in the humanity of Christ, a particular man, at a particular time and place. The Christian search for God therefore begins and ends with the humanity of Christ. As God then came to us in the man Jesus, so now the saving presence of the incarnate God is mediated to us by this-worldly realities of every kind. The holy ministry is the means through which the Christian is given birth, nurtured in the faith, and carried along to final salvation within the concrete reality of the church. As the mother who gave us birth, the church's influence pervades everything we are; there is no privileged point of view, no scientific high ground, on which the Christian can begin thinking about the church *de novo*. Ecclesiology, like everything else in the Christian faith, presumes the church.

The distinction between *esse* and *bene esse* is simply too blunt an instrument to take us much further, either in our self-understanding as Lutherans, or in our relations with other churches. We require precision tools fitted to a new and better understanding of the depth of our historical problem, ones that recognize our own embeddedness in the life and faith of the church. We need, in other words, a theology of the church that begins with the church itself and develops on that basis a Christian sense for history, a theology, in other words, of the people of God in time.

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Church Fellowship: Ecumenical progress and the methods involved

English translation of excerpts from
"La communion ecclésiale.
Progrès œcuméniques et enjeux méthodologiques"*):

A. *From Chapter VI: The Declaration of Church Fellowship between the Churches of the Reformation (page 275ff)*

The ministry and the debate on the historic episcopate and visible unity (page 300ff)

The understanding of the ministry, and of *episkope* in particular, has traditionally been considered the stumbling block between the Anglican, Lutheran and Reformed churches. In this field the problems have still not all been solved. But the unanswered questions can be seen in the context of a consensus on the understanding of the ministry which, as already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, makes the mutual recognition of ministries and church fellowship possible.

Agreement on the ministry, the necessity of episkope and apostolic succession

Leuenberg did not specifically devote a section to the ministry. The Agreement simply mentions the necessity of "forms of ministry and service" (13) and includes the mutual recognition of ordinations in the declaration itself (33). During the conversations which preceded the Agreement, there was awareness of the differences between the Lutheran and Reformed understandings but, in the history of the relations between the two traditions, these differences had always been considered legitimate, provided that the form of ministry adopted made an authentic celebration of the Word and the sacraments possible. The differences never separated the churches. This did not mean that Leuenberg eliminated the question but placed it on the agenda for later doctrinal conversations (39). Several post-Leuenberg dialogues have been devoted to this issue. The General Assembly at Strasbourg in 1987 received the so-called Neuendettelsau Theses and the Theses of Tampere and requested that the subject be broadened to include the understanding of the Church. This work has been done and its conclusions, *The Church of Jesus Christ*, were submitted to the General Assembly in Vienna (1994) which adopted the document. The chapter on "ministry" in this ecclesiological document includes the Tampere Theses as an expression of the consensus between the Lutheran and Reformed churches[1]. It must be pointed out

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that a document adopted by a General Assembly of official delegates from all the signatory churches does not enjoy the same status as the Agreement, which was approved by the synod of each church. Nevertheless, the document sets out the agreement between the Lutheran and Reformed traditions in an approved way.

This agreement has made a major contribution to progress in the dialogue between these traditions and the Anglican Communion. The consensus on the understanding of the ministry, which exists today between Lutherans, Reformed and Anglicans, is broad and comprises the following points.

1) Every Christian shares through faith and baptism in the ministry of the Church and is called to witness to the Gospel[2]. "We believe that all members of the Church are called to participate in its apostolic mission. They are therefore given various ministries by the Holy Spirit. They are called to offer themselves as 'a living sacrifice' and to intercede for the Church and the salvation of the world. This is the corporate priesthood of the whole people of God, called to ministry and service (I Peter 2,5)" (Reuilly 31h, which restates Porvoo 32i and supplements Meissen 15.8. It should be noted that these three declarations speak of the universal priesthood before dealing with any specific forms of ministry).

2) Within the framework of this priesthood of all believers, "the ministry of the public proclamation of the gospel and of the administration of the sacraments is fundamental and necessary for the church. Where the church exists it needs an 'ordered ministry' of the public proclamation of the gospel and of the administration of the sacraments." (Leuenberg, *The Church of Jesus Christ*[3]. Thus the Lutheran and Reformed churches agree on affirming the necessity of "ordained ministers"[4]. "In order to maintain constant and public proclamation of the gospel and to maintain correct doctrine trained members of the congregation are specially chosen and ordained. [...] [A]ccording to the understanding of the Reformation the ordained office rests upon a particular commission of Christ and at the same time stands together with the whole congregation in his service under the word of

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1 *The Church of Jesus Christ*, Leuenberger Texte 1, 1996, Section 2, pp. 90-102, Tampere Theses, pp. 97-99.

2 See ibid., p. 98-99.

3 ibid., p.99-100. See Tampere thesis No.1, p.97.

4 There is a problem connected with the expression "ordained ministry". The adjective "ordained" should be understood in the context of ministry to mean that it "fits into an order" or, in other words, "structured". It has a different meaning in the expression "ordained minister" where it qualifies a person to whom a specific ministry in the Church has been entrusted by the act of ordination. This nuance is important because the ministry is not the object of an act of ordination. In the follow up to BEM, this ambivalence has entered into the ecumenical dialogue as a whole. It gives rise to a wrong shade of meaning in German (*das ordinierte Amt*) and to an ambiguity concerning the ministry in English (*the ordained ministry*).

God" (Leuenberg, *The Church of Jesus Christ*[5]). The Reformed and Lutheran churches have confirmed this approach in their dialogue with the Anglicans and the ensuing declarations. "Within the community of the Church the ordained ministry exists to serve the ministry of the whole people of God. To this end the ordained ministry of word and sacrament is a gift of God to his Church and can consequently be described as being of divine institution" (Reuilly 31h which restates Meissen 15.8, cf. Porvoo 32j).

Within the community of the Church, the ordained ministry has a special place as a particular gift from God. This ministry is closely linked with the priesthood of all the believers but cannot simply be understood as emanating from the latter. Its particular mission is the service of the Word and the sacraments. However, it is exercised in a plural form (Porvoo 32j). The responsibility for preaching the Word and for the sacraments is not only that of the ordained ministry but of the whole community. The ordained ministry on its own does not guarantee the true being of the Church[6].

3) A third point of consensus relates to the necessity of a ministry of leadership, the need for *episkope*. The term is familiar to Lutheranism and Anglicanism but unusual in certain Reformed settings. But the matter is evident in practice. The three traditions have no difficulty in jointly stating: "We believe that a ministry of pastoral oversight (*episkope*), exercised in personal, collegial and communal ways, at all levels of the Church's life, is necessary to witness to and safeguard the unity and apostolicity of the Church" (Reuilly 31i which restates Meissen 15.9 with the addition of "at all levels of the life of the Church" and Porvoo 32k)[7].

4) Finally, there is agreement on an understanding of apostolic succession. This consensus had been emerging from the very beginning of the international dialogue (Pullach 73 f.). The apostolicity of the Church does not depend on an apostolic succession in the ministry – whether episcopal or not. Apostolicity is a gift God gives to his Church and it is expressed in various ways. The Porvoo common statement takes up these conclusions and underlines that the episcopal ministry exists to serve the apostolic succession of the Church as a whole (36-40 and 46). It is not the guarantee for but one expression of this

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[5] *The Church of Jesus Christ*, p.98. There is a specific debate on ordination in France where some would like to avoid the term, which is too often confused with "consecration". They prefer speaking of "recognition of the minister". However, there is agreement on the essence. Ordination is the moment when the minister undertakes a commitment to the Church and the Church to this minister whom it then recognises as having the ministry of preaching the Word and celebrating the sacraments in its midst. The ceremony includes the epiclesis and the laying on of hands. It takes place only once and should be distinguished from induction in a specific place.

[6] In this context the question of pastoral delegation arises by which the Church authorises one of the baptised, not ordained to the pastoral ministry, to celebrate the Word and sacraments for a specified time in a particular place. This practice is not unusual in Reformed and Lutheran congregations in a diaspora situation. It is less common in churches of the "folk church" kind. The Anglicans are familiar with this practice in the case of preaching but are more reticent about celebrations of the eucharist. Nevertheless, the question of *lay celebration* also arises in Anglicanism and the solutions adopted are similar to those of the Lutheran and Reformed churches. See the documents accompanying the Reuilly agreement in *Called to Witness and Service*, p.104f.

apostolicity. Historic episcopal succession is a sign of apostolicity (50 f.). Porvoo enabled the British Anglicans and the Nordic and Baltic Lutherans to agree on this point and to come to a common exercise of the episcopal ministry (see below). Meissen and Reuilly did not reach this common practice. Meissen is even surprisingly silent on the question of apostolic succession. So it was up to Reuilly to formulate the consensus on this issue: "We all agree that apostolicity belongs to the whole Church. Apostolic succession is the continuous return to the apostolic witness: it is an expression of the permanence, and therefore of the continuity, of Christ's own teaching and mission, in which all the baptized participate. The apostolicity of the Church, as fidelity to the apostolic teaching and mission, is manifested in a *successio fidelium* through the ages. Within the apostolicity of the whole Church is an apostolic succession of the ministry which serves, and is focus of, the continuity of the Church in its life in Christ and its faithfulness to the words and acts of Jesus transmitted by the apostles. The ordained ministry has a particular responsibility for witnessing to this apostolic tradition and for proclaiming it afresh with authority in every generation" (Reuilly 36).

This broad consensus on the understanding of ministry and apostolic succession constituted the necessary and sufficient basis for the declarations of Meissen and Reuilly, which led Lutherans and Reformed, on the one hand, and Anglicans, on the other, to a mutual recognition of ordained ministries (Meissen 17 and Reuilly 46). Unlike Porvoo, the interchangeability of ministers is however still not possible, because the Anglicans wish first to have a common exercise of the ministry which, in their view, requires a common episcopal ministry.

The sign of the historic episcopate

1) The Lutheran/Reformed dialogue came to the conclusion that the leadership of the Church can be exercised either by a (historic) episcopal ministry or by a presbyterian synodal structure and the ministries related to it. "... no single historically arisen form of church leadership and ministerial structure can or may be laid down as a prior condition for fellowship and for mutual recognition" (Leuenberg, *The Church of Jesus Christ*[8]).

This point was a particularly important issue on the agenda of the dialogue that led up to the Reuilly statement. The Lutheran and Reformed representatives affirmed there that they "also believe that their ministries are in apostolic succession. In their ordination rites they emphasize the continuity of the Church and its ministry. They can recognize in the historic episcopal succession a sign of the apostolicity of the Church. They do not, however, consider it a necessary condition for full visible unity" (Reuilly 38). That is not the view of the Anglicans who "believe that the historic episcopate is a sign of the apostolicity of the whole Church. The ordination of bishops in historic succession (that is, in intended continuity with the apostles themselves) is a sign of God's promise to be with the Church, and also the way the Church communicates its care for continuity in the whole of its faith, life and mission, and renews its intention and determination to manifest the permanent

8 *The Church of Jesus Christ*, p.99.

characteristics of the Church of the apostles. Anglicans hold that the full visible unity of the Church includes the historic episcopal succession" (Reuilly 37).[9]

This point indicates a limit beyond which Meissen and Reuilly were unable to go.

2) Porvoo was able to take the additional step. That stage became possible thanks to the Lutheran partner. The Nordic and Baltic Lutheran churches do indeed have an ecclesiology, which is strongly marked by the episcopal ministry. In contrast not only to the Reformed but also to the Lutheran churches in central and western Europe, the above churches, which also have a collegial and synodic dimension in their church governance, insist above all on the personal exercise of the episcopal ministry (in collegiality with the other bishops of the church). At Porvoo the Lutherans and Anglicans were able to state jointly, "Oversight of the Church and its mission is the particular responsibility of the bishop" (Porvoo 43). Moreover, several of these churches, such as the large Church of Sweden, have always insisted on historic succession in the episcopal ministry which had been preserved in that context, the transition to the Reformation having taken place there in the 16th century without any political or ecclesial crisis. The Lutheran churches in those areas found it easy to satisfy the Anglican demand for full visible unity including the specific sign of historic succession in the episcopate.

This stage was also possible because of the Anglican partner. The British churches clearly affirmed that succession was not the guarantee for apostolicity but only one sign among others expressing this fundamental mark of all the church. This conviction was translated into practice by the full recognition of the episcopate of the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran churches where there had been a break the historic succession at the time of the Reformation (e.g. in Norway). "[A] church which has preserved the sign of historic episcopal succession is free to acknowledge the authentic episcopal ministry in a church, which has preserved continuity in the episcopal office by an occasional priestly/presbyterial ordination at the time of the Reformation" (Porvoo 52)[10]. The consequence is what Günther Gassmann, a former director of Faith and Order, considers the most important sentence of Porvoo[11]: "The mutual acknowledgement of our churches and ministries are theologically prior to the use of the sign of the laying on of hands in the

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[9] Meissen 16 states on this: "Lutheran, Reformed and United Churches, though being increasingly prepared to appreciate episcopal succession (*not 'apostolic' as erroneously stated in the French translation)* 'as a sign of the apostolicity of the life of the whole Church', hold that this particular form of *episkope* should not become a necessary condition for 'full, visible unity'. The Anglican understanding of full, visible unity includes the historic episcopate and full interchangeability of ministers (*not 'ministries' as in the French translation*). Because of this remaining difference our mutual recognition of one another's ministries does not yet result in the full interchangeability of ministers."

[10] Porvoo adds that this step is possible also because "[t]he continuity represented by the occupation [by bishops not ordained in the historic episcopate] of historic succession is more than personal" (Provoo 49).

[11] G. GASSMANN: "Das Porvoo Dokument als Grundlage anglikanisch-lutherischer Kirchengemeinschaft im nördlichen Europa", *ÖR* 44/1995, p.172-183 (p.178).

historic succession. Resumption of the use of the sign does not imply an adverse judgement on the ministries of those churches, which did not previously make use of this sign. It is rather a means of making more visible the unity and continuity of the Church at all times and in all places" (Porvoo 53). Thus the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran churches without historic succession in their episcopal ministry and those which have recently reintroduced it were considered by the Anglicans to be on the same level of apostolic continuity as themselves and their present bishops have been fully recognised[12].

On this basis, the Lutheran and Anglican churches concerned did not have any difficulty about stating together the particular value of historic succession as a sign of apostolicity and including this form of episcopal ministry in the model of unity adopted by Porvoo.
3) At this point we need to make more explicit reference to the Lutheran/Episcopal (Anglican) dialogue in the Unites States which has proposed the Concordat. In those proceedings the attitude of the Episcopalians was different. Since the American Lutherans had not preserved the sign of historic succession in the episcopate, they proposed, in agreement with the Lutherans preparing the statement, to work towards a progressive unification of ministries. By inviting Episcopalian bishops from now onwards to participate in the episcopal ordination of future Lutheran bishops, it was to be possible to achieve full unification after about two generations. The significance of the historic episcopate as a sign was thus increased and it became the condition for recognizing the Lutheran episcopate; this was not the case at Porvoo[13]. The proposal did not obtain the two-thirds majority required at the synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in the summer of 1997 at Philadelphia. The proposal was referred back for further study. However, this point had not been amended in the version adopted in the summer of 1999. The adoption made it possible to implement the CCM, but the opposition within the ELCA is still a reality and will probably be an obstacle to the reception of this statement.

On the other hand, for the Waterloo Declaration the Canadian Lutherans and Anglicans reached agreement on the basis of the Porvoo model.

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12 By recognising at Porvoo an authentic ministry in places where the historic succession in the classical sense had been interrupted, the Anglicans have been consistent and confirmed what they have stated from the beginning of the dialogue and often repeated since. In 1972 they declared in the Pullach report, "The [Anglican] participants wish to state that they see in the Lutheran Church an authentic proclamation of the word and a true celebration of the sacraments [...] Consequently we joyfully recognise in the Lutheran Churches the true communion of the body of Christ which possesses a true apostolic ministry" (85). The personal note by the Anglican chairman at the end of the report (109 f) explains, by virtue of a historical analysis, that it "is not easy to say which [Lutheran] churches do not possess [true episcopal ministry]" (114).

13 See Michael Root: "A Striking Convergence in American Ecumenism", *Origins* 26/1996, pp. 60-64, and also his previous article: "Anglican-Lutheran Relations. Their Broader Ecumenical Significance", *One in Christ* 30/1994, pp. 22-33, especially p.26, and "Anglikanisch-lutherische Kirchengemeinschaft in den USA", *EK.* 33/2000, pp. 41 f.

"Full" visible unity

The theological problem, which follows from these different conclusions of Porvoo, on the one hand, and Meissen and Reuilly, on the other, is the quality of the church fellowship achieved in each case.

There is undeniably a certain tension between mutual recognition as the Church of Jesus Christ and the reality of the communion that follows from it. However, when churches mutually recognize one another as true expressions of the one Church of Jesus Christ and hence as members of the same communion, can we speak about different qualities of the communions which unite us? In other words, is the communion with one group qualitatively more "full" than that with another, which we also recognize as the Church of Christ?

To speak about stages in communion is one of the classical themes of the ecumenical movement. Even when churches are separate, communion is not simply non-existent. The decree on ecumenism from the second Vatican Council and many other ecumenical documents refer to a certain degree of communion, which is certainly imperfect but is communion nevertheless. However, these documents never speak about common celebration of the Word and sacraments or about mutual recognition as the true Church of Jesus Christ as do Leuenberg, Vienna, Meissen, Porvoo and Reuilly. To affirm that one of these declarations of church fellowship implies a communion qualitatively superior to the others is problematic from a theological point of view. It seems hardly possible to consider a communion declared with a church family, which is otherwise considered part of the Church of Christ and as truly expressing the latter, to be less than true and full.

Such a distinction between more or less full communions would also be disastrous on the ecclesial level. The churches would get themselves caught in a series of false alternatives. Thus, for example, the Nordic Lutheran Churches would have a higher quality of communion with the British Anglican churches compared with what unites them with other Lutheran churches in the context of the Lutheran World Federation. And what is the quality of the communion, which links the other churches in the Anglican Communion? Do the Baltic Lutheran Churches have a communion with the British Anglicans which is qualitatively superior to that with the other churches participating in the Leuenberg Agreement which they have also signed? This game could be continued indefinitely, quoting many dead ends to which these false alternatives could lead.

Nevertheless, the question stands and the very existence of declarations with differing conclusions calls for some clarification.

1) For the churches which are signatories to Leuenberg, the communion in Word and sacraments is qualitatively "full" communion, because this communion is none other than communion in Christ which could not be partial. If communion in Christ is a fact, there is nothing missing from the fullness of the Church of Christ. It would not be possible to consider episcopal ministry a condition for a "fuller" communion. Neither for Lutheran and Reformed churches, nor indeed for Anglicans, does it constitute a condition for communion in Word and sacraments or mutual recognition of ministries.

While rejecting the expression "more or less full" communion, these churches are familiar with an important distinction. The declaration of communion in Word and sacrament, which cannot be exceeded qualitatively, must be distinguished from the way in which this communion is perceived and lived out in the practical reality of the churches. It is significant that the fourth section of Leuenberg makes a clear distinction between the declaration and the realization of church fellowship. The quality of the communion is established by the declaration. The communion declared then has to become a reality lived out at the local level. It must be perceptible. To enable communion to become a reality, the Leuenberg Agreement proposes four ways: common witness and service, undertaking of theological work, organizational consequences and ecumenical aspects. Over the past thirty years a number of factors have improved the visibility of this communion. In certain realms (e.g. theological work) and in certain regions, this communion is more perceptible than in others.

Reuilly 21 lays great emphasis on this by stating that "the Church must be one and must be seen to be one". The English text says at this point that "*the Church must be seen to be one.*" Anglicans have become accustomed to speaking about *visibility* in this connection. The term is difficult to translate and includes more than the simple notion of *visibilité* in French; it also implies perceptibility and this is certainly the sense in which visibility should be understood when it is used in the French versions of the statements today.

When understood in this way, the distinction between the unity of the Church and the full visibility of this unity can be received without difficulty by the Lutheran and Reformed Churches and provides a way out of the false alternatives arising from references to a communion which is qualitatively "more or less full".

2) The Anglicans are following the same path but doing so with greater caution.

The expression *full communion* is not widely current in the ecumenical movement. It is found mainly among Anglicans who used it in their early international dialogues[14] to describe the goal to be reached. It was only towards the end of the eighties that things began to develop. Greater caution became evident in the use of *full communion* and there preference was given to speaking about *full, visible unity*. This development can be perceived at Meissen where these terms are used. Full, visible unity comprises communion

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[14] This expression is very rare in dialogues with Rome or with the Orthodox. It is found above all in the Anglican/Lutheran dialogue. Pullach identifies communion in Word and sacraments with *full communion* (53). The same applies to the dialogue in the United States at the beginning of the 1980s (*Lutheran-Episcopal Agreement [1982]. Commentary and Guidelines.* New York 1983, paragraph 5). That same international dialogue used a different definition ten years later when the regular invitation of bishops from the sister church to episcopal ordinations was added to communion in the Word and sacraments with a view to *full communion* (Cold Ash 25 f.). From that time onwards the definition seems to be established. See also M.ROOT: "The Phrase 'Full Communion' as a Statement of the Ecumenical Goal as Described in the Proposed Ecumenical Policy Statement of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America)", in W. RUSCH (ed.): *A Commentary on Ecumenism: The Vision of the ELCA.* Minneapolis 1990, Appendix 3, pp. 142-153.

in the confession of the faith, in baptism, the eucharist, a common ministry and "bonds of communion which enable the Church at every level to guard and interpret the apostolic faith" (Meissen 8). Nowadays one avoids stating that this full, visible unity is *full communion*. There has been an initial shift in emphasis; greater weight is given to visibility. Porvoo is still more careful and completely avoids both *full communion* and *full, visible unity*. It is satisfied to affirm that unity "demands further visible embodiment in structural form" (Provoo 22) and that "[f]or the fullness of communion all these visible aspects of the life of the Church require to be permeated by a profound spiritual communion [...]" (Provoo 28). The emphasis lies clearly on visible communion. Whereas *full communion* has become a synonym of the eschatological communion of the Church in the fullness of the kingdom of God.

There is confirmation of the same development in the English dialogue between the Anglican Church and the Moravians in which *full communion* is reserved explicitly and exclusively for the eschatological fullness of the Church. The ecumenical efforts needed today, according to this dialogue, must have *full visible unity* as their goal [15]. One should note the disappearance of the comma between *full* and *visible*. It is not mere coincidence. *Full* qualifies *visible unity*. It was at this point in the development that Reuilly was drafted. The goal is to grow into *full visible unity* (title of IV with no comma). In order not merely to play on words and commas, and to avoid hypotheses which might prove unfounded, Reuilly, unlike Meissen, devotes a whole section to this point and makes it explicit: "Perfect unity must await the full realization of God's kingdom [...]. But in a fallen world we are committed to strive for the 'full visible unity' of the body of Christ on earth" (Reuilly 22). The elements used in Meissen to describe full, visible unity are now taken up in the description of "full visible unity" (Reuilly 23). On the way to *full visible unity*, communion in the Word and the sacraments and the recognition of ministries is a first stage for the Anglicans; "a further stage [is] the formation of a reconciled, common ministry in the historic episcopal succession, together with the establishment of forms of collegial and conciliar oversight" (Reuilly 27).

The question is still delicate and a matter for discussion even within the Anglican Communion where some regret this development. The most recent declarations are clear: the remaining difference does not pertain to a communion which is more or less full with some than with others but rather to a more or less visible unity. We must also underline the prudent way in which Porvoo avoids qualifying the visibility achieved and does not claim to be "full visible unity". Nevertheless, Porvoo constitutes one more stage on the road to full visible unity; the common exercise of *episkope* gives the communion a dimension beyond what Meissen and Reuilly were able to achieve.

Hence, one should not confuse the basis – the communion given by God in which the individual churches participate and which binds these churches to one another – with the form, the visible expression of this communion - visible unity. In the latter case, it is legitimate to distinguish between the various stages of its realization.

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15 *Anglican-Moravian Conversations. The Fetter Lane Common Statement.* London 1996, p.4 f.

- Only such a distinction can do justice to the understanding of unity proposed by all these statements. The churches participating recognize one another mutually as expressions of the one Church of Jesus Christ and are endeavouring to give the best possible visibility to this recognition.
- The various phases of visibility do not justify opposing the different communions declarations of communion.
- These declarations constitute different stages in the visibility of unity in the one communion of the Church of Christ.

The structures of visible unity

The necessity of structures of unity

The difference between Meissen and Reuilly, on the one hand, and Porvoo, on the other, relates to the visibility or perceptibility of unity. This difference in perceptibility is not a matter of principles for implementation; rather, it is an important theological difference concerning the "structures of unity" which should or should not accompany the new quality of communion.

1) While they commit themselves to sharing life and a common mission, Meissen and Reuilly, unlike Porvoo, do not provide for common leadership of the church. Those declarations have set up working groups with the task of coordinating the measures to be adopted in order to deepen the realization of their communion. But even the listing of very concrete measures (Reuilly 44) cannot hide the fact that, so far, there are no real structures of unity as a framework for the new communion and to support the latter.

For the Anglicans, the pivotal point concerning the structure of unity is the ministry responsible for church unity, namely the episcopal ministry. That approach is shared by the Nordic and Baltic Lutherans and this convergence made Porvoo possible. The Lutheran and Reformed Churches on the "continent" are not ready to enter into this type of structure of unity. It corresponds neither to their theological conviction, which gives greater emphasis to the synodic element, nor to their history, nor to their spiritual tradition. So one cannot blame them. But one must nevertheless challenge them and ask them what structures of unity they would be prepared to envisage.

It is not a question of adopting the British and Nordic model but of seeking a framework which can contribute to giving full authority to declarations of communion, a framework which will allow the one Church effectively to live as the Church transcending the classical frontiers of nations and confessions, a framework which can avoid imprisonment in a spiritualized ecumenism that is not incarnate in the everyday life of the churches.

To make sure there is no misunderstanding: the creation of a supplementary church institution would not solve any problems. That is not what is being asked for. It is a matter of giving oneself the means of taking common decisions, which will apply to the churches committed by the declarations. In a more general way, there is the question of the

appropriate way of living out unity in mutual loyalty, with the advantages and constraints involved in any commitment, including that between churches.

2) Mere reference to this possibility generally causes the Lutheran and Reformed Churches in continental Europe to raise their defenses and react passionately. This simple observation reveals the fact that the relationship between these church families and the problem of exercising authority in the Church is often insufficiently clear or even ambivalent. In the name of the "independence" of the local and regional church, there is general distrust of all forms of leadership whose decisions might become binding on this local or regional church[16]. Certainly,

synodic procedures are followed at local or regional level, but there are reservations about any delegation to a level that cannot be "controlled" more directly. This attitude is not primarily an ecumenical problem but rather a problem internal to each tradition, which tends to be brought to light by ecumenical involvement.

Apart from power games, and often in order to conceal them, the argument put forward to justify the demand for autonomy or for "congregationalism in the exercise of authority" is theological and ecclesiological. In both Lutheran and Reformed circles, there is insistence on a line of argument, which is believed to be that of Article 7 of the Augsburg Confession. We have often cited this article which states that the authentic preaching of the Gospel and the true celebration of the sacraments constitute the necessary and sufficient condition for the existence of the Church and for its unity. This essential conviction is interpreted in an exclusive sense and used in a reductive way, as in the case of the "chief article"[17]. Anything that is not directly related to these factors is declared superfluous. This description of the elements, which constitute the true being of the Church, is considered exhaustive in the name of the Gospel. For Reformation theology, that is certainly true in the sense that it is opposed to any additional factor that might be presented as necessary and might be absolutized to contradict or obscure the Gospel. History provides numerous examples of such deviations. But this same Reformation theology has never claimed to be able to do without church structures. A *constitution,* which orders the life, unity and exercise of authority in church life, is indispensable. It belongs not to the *esse* but to the *bene esse* of the Church. Hence it is not necessary to the same extent as the word and sacraments celebrated according to the Gospel. That was the concern of the Reformation. And yet the affirmation of these necessary and sufficient elements should not be interpreted in an exclusive sense, which concludes that constitutions are superfluous when they are obviously necessary for the *bene esse* of the Church. They are useful for the Church in the strong sense of the term. Their non-necessity to the being of the Church does not imply their uselessness; quite the opposite.

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16 At local and regional levels, these churches usually have strong structures; some even suffer from a hypertrophy of structures and regulations.

17 See Chapter IV.

That was the interpretation in the 16th century. Having rightly questioned the power of the bishops which, in their eyes, contradicted the Gospel, the communities, which accepted the Reformation adopted other means. The Reformed tradition developed "discipline", a notion, which is not synonymous with bureaucratic regulations; it is a spiritual discipline, a church order on the basis of which the ministers commit themselves at ordination, just as they commit themselves in relation to the confessions of the faith. The Lutheran tradition entrusted this responsibility to the civil authorities, originally against its will as a result of its failure to establish a reformed episcopate. The authorities exercised this responsibility in a situation unfamiliar with the separation of church and state. The Ausgburg Confession makes this abundantly clear. After defining the Church and the sacraments, Articles 14 and 15 deal with the leadership of the Church and the structures which are not to take the place of the Gospel but whose necessity is not questioned[18]. The insistence on the sole necessity of the Word and sacraments is therefore not understood there as synonymous with the uselessness of church structures.

This problem has not been solved in the churches that evolved from the Reformation. The absence of constitution or discipline (in the Reformed sense of the term) would lead, on the contrary, to a surplus of bureaucratic regulations. It is certainly not the latter which need to be strengthened. The question of a constitution relates less to organization than to the spiritual discipline on which the believers agree, and which is an essential factor in ordering the relation between the local church and the supra-local church without allowing any unilateral exercise of power.

3) Since this question has not been resolved within the confessional families of the church, nor can it be on the inter-confessional or international levels. So the ecumenical movement only increases the difficulty after initially bringing this shortcoming to light. The pioneers of the ecumenical movement were aware of this even at the beginning of the 20th century. They gave the name "Faith and Order" to a major branch of their work and the title constitutes a whole program. The issue has remained open and has always led to the same questions. The authority of the World Council of Churches was examined and the conclusion of the discussion, three years after the Council was founded, affirmed in the Toronto declaration of 1951 that the decisions of the Council could not be binding on the member churches. This same debate has been a permanent feature within each of the Christian world communions with the constant reminder that decisions taken by world bodies have no authority over national churches which have sole charge of their own destiny. The same applies to the world structures based on full church fellowship between their member churches, such as the Lutheran World Federation and also the Anglican Communion. There has been constant insistence on the autonomy of their member

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18 The title of Article 15 "concerning ecclesiatical rites" (FEL, no.21) made sense in the 16th century because the term did not have the negative connotation associated with it today. It was not a matter of factors one could do without. From 1526 onwards, new "church constitutions" were adopted as well as "regulations for the visitation of parishes".

churches[19]. Naturally, there can be no question of claiming that such bodies have an authority higher than the synodic decisions of the local churches; it simply refers to a problem which the Reformation churches find hard to solve.

Lukas Vischer, a Swiss Reformed theologian who spent many years as director of Faith and Order, was a Protestant observer at Vatican II. His critique of the Council raises an important question for the traditions derived from the Reformation. He asks whether these churches are themselves able to be conciliar, in other words, to reach agreement among themselves, as Vatican II did, on a whole series of constitutions and decrees that would then have authority in their midst[20]. Lukas Vischer has his doubts. He voices a warning about too spiritualistic an ecumenism and wishes that his tradition were able to rediscover the dimension of *jus divinum* in church order. However, he does not offer an apology for the Roman system and remains very critical of a distortion of *jus divinum* into *jus ecclesiasticum.* But he confronts the Reformation churches with a real question, which has not been answered satisfactorily to date.

The permanent task for the Reformation churches is to recall that church constitutions are not necessary to the Church in the same way as the celebration of the Word and the sacraments. A continuing critique of constitutions is required in order to preserve the authenticity of the proclamation of the Gospel. But their usefulness and necessity are grounded in the fact that they create and open up the space into which the one Gospel can enter. Even if this function belongs to the *bene esse* of the Church, it is not therefore usual on the *bene volens* of the Church. Constitutions are necessary to serve the elements that constitute the Church and its unity.

Declarations of fellowship between churches of the Reformation tradition have demonstrated, apart from the decisive ecumenical breakthroughs which they have achieved, that the question of the visible structures of unity remains a task for the future to be put on the agenda of dialogues and clarified within each church family.

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19 Many examples to illustrate this fact could be quoted from within the life of the Lutheran World Federation, without forgetting the arguments of a number of German theologians insisting that the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification has no authority. These are merely symptoms pointing to the reality of the problem to be solved.

20 L. VISCHER: *Überlegungen nach dem zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil.* Zurich 1966, "Polis 66", p.42 f. At the end of the Council, Vischer raised the question, "Who in Protestantism can speak on behalf of the churches?" It is not only a matter of public pronouncements but also of the whole realm of doctrinal evolution in Protestantism, a question clearly illustrated thirty-five years later by the debate surrounding the JD. The question which Lukas Vischer asked gave rise to a study concluded by Faith and Order in 1974 on the subject of who can speak with authority on behalf of the churches. The English title is "How does the Church Teach Authoritatively Today?" (1977), in: G. GASSMANN (ed.), *Documentary History of Faith and Order. 1963-1993.* Geneva 1993, pp.240-255. The study cleared the ground but was not able to reach any conclusions that the churches might have adopted "authoritatively".

Serving the whole ecumenical movement (page 316)

All the churches that have signed these declarations understand their new relationships as a contribution to serving the unity of all the churches in their church families and also churches of other traditions. They feel committed to serving the unity of the one Church of Jesus Christ and the communion of all Christian churches.

The declarations are not perfect, nor do they claim to be. They constitute a starting point more than a finishing line. At present, the relations between the churches involved have acquired a different quality. The new dialogues that are now required between their traditions will take place in a context of mutual recognition and communion in Word and sacrament comprising the recognition of ministries and ministers. To use theological language, the situation is no longer pre-conciliar but conciliar, despite the difficulties related to the visible structures of unity. Because they are conscious of belonging to the same Church of Christ, the various church families derived from the Reformation know they are in communion, and not merely linked to one another by federal bonds such as those which link the various churches that are members of the World Council of Churches, for example. This new quality of relations makes it possible for future work to be based on and conducted within the existing communion, a quality of relations which had been reserved in the past to the churches within only one ecclesial tradition - Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist or Anglican.

At the international level, there are few examples of inter-church relations with conclusions that have made such a development possible. The dialogues with other traditions (e.g. with the Catholics or the Orthodox), but also the international dialogues between Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran and Reformed Churches, have not yet been able to reach this stage at the world level.

The churches which have signed the declarations, whether in Europe or in North America, have sought a way forward of expressing "unity in reconciled diversity". This way forward is not their private property but belongs to the whole ecumenical movement and should be able to be adapted to other places. Some traditions may find that this approach does not satisfy their ecclesiological, ministerial and sacramental understanding. The way proposed is that of the Reformation churches. It is open for debate.

B. From Chapter VIII: The Challenges of "Reception" and the "Compatibility" of the Results of Ecumenical Work (page 361ff)

The compatibility between the various dialogues of one church family (page 380ff)

1) Does one and the same Christian tradition always use the same language in its various dialogues with different partners? Are its different expressions not contradictory and hence incompatible? When questions are asked like that, the answer will not be positive. It is of course difficult to find flagrant contradictions in the various dialogues of one tradition. Despite the great diversity of participants involved in the dialogues of one and the same

tradition, one can generally observe considerable coherence in its ecumenical approach. Nevertheless, the question of compatibility is not without interest, provided it is asked somewhat differently. Every church has some diversity within it. Is this legitimate diversity, which constitutes the richness of a particular church, also acceptable to its partner in dialogue? The question can give rise to the following constellation. Church A reaches an agreement with Church B on an understanding which is perfectly possible in the context of these two traditions. This same Church A spells out a view with another partner, Church C, which is also perfectly possible within the tradition of A but is not acceptable to Church B, because the latter understands the limits to diversity differently. What some may consider legitimate diversity may be seen by others as dividing the Church.

2) There is a good illustration of this in the various affirmations from the dialogues of the Catholic Church on the episcopal ministry. The Roman Catholic - Orthodox dialogue refers to a close relation between the ministry of Christ and the ministry of the bishop: "By the sacrament of ordination, the Spirit of the Lord 'confers' on the bishop, not juridically as if it were a pure transmission of power, but sacramentally, the authority of servant which the Son received from the Father [...]. [The bishop] appears then as minister of Christ fashioning the unity of his body, and so creating communion through his body. [...] It is that union expressed in the eucharist which is prolonged and given practical expression in the 'pastoral' relations of teaching, government, and life".[1] The international Lutheran - Roman Catholic dialogue, for its part and at the same period, stated: "In the *Catholic* teaching, the most eminent task of the bishops consists of the preaching of the gospel. In this the bishops are both preachers of the faith and authentic teachers of the faith [...]. The bishops can discharge this task only in community with the whole church. For the entire people of God participates in the prophetic office of Christ; the entire people of God receives the supernatural sense of the faith from the Holy Spirit. Priests share Christ's prophetic office in a special manner; they are co-workers in the preaching and teaching ministry of the bishops" [...];[2] The later dialogues have further spelled out and confirmed the bishop's ministry of preaching and oversight but without referring to a special relationship between bishop and eucharist that would define a particular relation between the bishop and Christ. In the Anglican - Roman Catholic dialogue (ARCIC I), apart from the emphasis given to the leadership ministry of the bishop, it was observed that "*episkope* only exists to serve the *koinonia*. The ordained minister presiding over the eucharist is a sign of Christ gathering his people by given them his body and his blood [...] The responsibility of those who exercise *episkope* is to enable everyone to use the gifts of the Spirit received to enrich the community life of the Church[3]."

All of these statements are possible from a Roman Catholic point of view; they are complementary and coherent. Is it possible for all the partners to the dialogue to accept all

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1 "The mystery of the Church and of the eucharist in the light of the mystery of the Holy Trinity", Information Service, (Unity Secretariat, Vatican) 49/1982, p.118 in French version.

2 The Ministry in the Church, 1982, 50f.

3 ARCIC I, The Final Report, Windsor, 1981, p.15.

these affirmations? The answer to this question can only be negative. Indeed, the Orthodox will have to state that the elements underlined by the Roman Catholics in the dialogue with the Reformation Churches touch on only some aspects of this ministry. Conversely, the arguments presented by the Catholics in their dialogue with the Orthodox are hardly acceptable to traditions derived from the Reformation. The incompatibility is to be found less in the Catholic affirmations that in the fact that what the Catholics see as being only one of the aspects of the episcopal ministry constitutes the fullness of this ministry in the Reformation understanding.

That example attempts to describe a phenomenon. It would be false to understand it as criticism of the dialogues conducted by Rome. One could naturally have taken other examples and asked about the compatibility of the statements on *episkope* in the Lutheran - Anglican dialogues, on the one hand, with the silence on this issue in the Lutheran - Reformed dialogue. Reference could also have been made to other issues. All these examples serve to indicate the same phenomenon: one church family does not say different things to one group or another. But what it can say in a dialogue with one group is not always possible for its other partners.

3) To raise the question of compatibility in this way is a reminder that the legitimate diversity present in the context of one tradition is not necessarily acceptable to others, which may consider that this diversity comprises mutually exclusive options.

Here we again see what the Lutheran - Roman Catholic dialogue has called "asymetry"[4]. Specific emphases express different ways of linking elements of faith and doctrine. The non-identity of different "hierarchies of truths" in church traditions is an essential explanation for the different understandings of the limits to legitimate diversity. So the insistence common to the Reformation traditions on the "chief article" makes possible a diversity in the current understanding of ministries within and between families, which came out of the Reformation, but this is unacceptable for Rome or Constantinople. Conversely, the Catholic simultaneous insistence on salvation by faith and a sacramental understanding of the Church, which the Reformation churches see as incompatible, is in conformity with the Catholic "hierarchy of truths".

In the situation today it is hardly surprising that, in their different dialogues, each family insists on the points of convergence which bring it closer to the tradition of the partner with which it is speaking, while neglecting, without ill will, to mention that its own wealth extends beyond this one possibility. Neither is it surprising that this incompatibility should come to light in the course of the reception process.

If the question of incompatibility is treated in this way, it shows how churches on both sides handle specific truths, which express their particular approach to the one Gospel. It raises the question of the compatibility of "hierarchies of truths". So far there is no consensus on this point[5].

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4 *Facing unity*, 94.

5 See Chapter IV.

The compatibility of various ecumenical dialogues with one another (page 383)

1) The third area in which the issue of compatibility arises is that of all the dialogues taken together. Surely the number and diversity of these dialogues are the best proof of the impossibility of harmonizing all the approaches. Most frequently, it is this aspect of the problem, which is quoted by those who claim the dialogues are incompatible. Their criticism is not unfounded because it is not difficult to find a number of incompatibilities in the large number of documents available. The complete list of proposals from the dialogues reflects a broad variety of theological and ecclesial approaches. For example, despite the internal coherence present in the dialogues of each tradition (cf. above), local Lutheran congregations will find it somewhat difficult to establish the link between the dialogues their tradition has had with the Baptists, on the one hand, and with the Reformed, Methodists or Anglicans, on the other, not to mention the Roman Catholics or the Orthodox. But they would be still more surprised if they compared these results with what their various partners might say (or not be able to say) in the dialogues in which they, for their part, are engaged with other partners. This remark does not only apply to specific questions on which there may be at least several conclusions – as in the case of the ministry to which reference has often been made, but also to understandings of unity and more general views on ecclesiology. We need not repeat that, in this example as well, the adjectives used to qualify the confessions are interchangeable. Any church body engaged in a number of dialogues is confronted with this type of problem, which slows down and often prevents reception at the local church level.

2) The difficulty is not so much the outcome of an incompatibility as of misapprehension about the meaning of dialogues and of their conclusions. Greater care must be taken to distinguish between the conclusions of dialogues, on the one side, and declarations approved by synods, on the other. We shall restrict ourselves for the moment to the conclusions of dialogues. The reports are not ecclesiastical documents but rather preparatory papers, some and only some of which may provide the basis at a second stage for agreements that will have authority in the churches.

The dialogues form part of a provisional process[6]. They are fully aware of this and have never claimed to be the last word. They see themselves as proposals submitted to the

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[6] Here one should include a longer treatment of the diversity of dialogues, which are not directly comparable. A) The subjects on the agenda for dialogues reflect the different emphases related to confessional identities. Thus, for example, a dialogue between Reformed and Baptist churches will necessarily tackle issues different from those between Rome and Canterbury. Moreover, for one and the same church family, the subjects will vary depending on the partners. The Lutherans, for example, in their dialogues with the Reformed churches are interested in questions other than those in their conversations with the Roman Catholics, Orthodox or Baptists. One can understand this fact because it was different questions of faith, which led to their separation. Surmounting reciprocal doctrinal condemnations determines the agenda for dialogues and also these different emphases. Even if what is finally at stake in all the dialogues is to reestablish unity, the diversity of the partners and the history of their relationships with this or that tradition will be the basis for different approaches, give rise to specific agendas and affect the ways and means of conducting the dialogue. B) The particular situation of each church is a second explanation for the diversity of the dialogues. In the countries of the "Third World", a dialogue between the churches will differ

churches. Although they have an official mandate from the churches, they are a place for research, a laboratory, which suggests new ways in an attempt to overcome antagonisms. It is up to the churches, especially their commissions on theology, to receive these results, in other words, to subject them to a critical reading and to convey their opinion to the dialogue commission with proposals to enable it to continue and improve its work. The reception by the churches will give meaning to the conclusions of the dialogues, showing that certain proposals do indeed make it possible to overcome obstacles while others will prove to have no future when the reception process has been completed.

Since they wish the local churches to share in their endeavours, the dialogue commissions want their conclusions to be widely distributed without considering them final. As a result, they involuntarily contribute to the confusion and to the suspicion of incompatibility. The proposal by the Lutheran - Roman Catholic international dialogue, *Facing Unity*, in 1985, which envisaged the gradual integration of the ministries of these two traditions by means of joint ordinations, is a good illustration[7]. The dialogue group considered it opportune to envisage this possibility and submit it for broader discussion. The proposal has not been taken up either by the Catholic Church or by the Lutheran Churches. But merely publishing it gave rise to some confusion because it was not always understood that it was a proposal of a provisional nature. The same kind of comment could be made on a number of other proposals from dialogue commissions, the most recent being the document from ARCIC II (1999), *The Gift of Authority*, where the Anglican participants in the dialogue commission showed openness for the Catholic understanding of authority and the church hierarchy. That was a suggestion made for discussion and not a stand taken by the Anglican Communion – an essential distinction, which cannot be overemphasized[8].

If dialogue proposals are understood in this way, a certain amount of incompatibility belongs to the provisional, exploratory nature of the dialogues. It is not the opposite of ecumenical progress and can even clear the ground for it at this preparatory stage.

3) Two elements could help to resolve this situation which is often wrongly understood. On the one hand, attention must be given to the "different nuances" of reception, spelling

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from one conducted in Europe, for example. Even a particular concern that is characteristic of one confessional family will be expressed differently depending on the context. These differences in emphasis can also be explained by culture and geography. Dialogue results reflect the situations in which the dialogues took place. C) In addition, there is the question of the identity of the theologians participating in a dialogue. Naturally, dialogues are not the outcome of individual initiatives. The theologians who take part have been nominated officially by their churches and engage in the dialogues on behalf of their confessional traditions. But it is still inevitable that an Anglican theologian, for example, who has a particular interest in Catholicism but also some sympathy with that tradition, will be asked to participate in his tradition's dialogue with Rome. This cannot fail to have consequences for the dialogue and its results. The same applies to an Anglican theologian with a special interest in the Lutherans, the Orthodox, the Reformed, the Methodists or the Baptists and who will underline his proximity to those traditions in a dialogue with them. This "Anglican" example can naturally be extended to all participants in all dialogues.

7 See *Facing Unity*, no.86 f.

8 *Le Don de l'autorité* , *DC* 2204,1999, p. 464-479.

out both the meaning and weight of the documents sent to the churches and the type of reception desired. Secondly, multilateral dialogue must be given its full significance as a primary, indispensable context for mutual verification, which goes beyond the bilateral setting alone. At that level it would be desirable for Faith and Order and the forum of the Christian World Communions, or even the World Council of Churches itself, to become, or to become again, the framework for coordinating bilateral dialogues. This was certainly one of the concerns behind the attempt to redefine the WCC at the assembly in Harare (1998). The Lima documents offer a valuable framework within which the various confessional families could make concrete progress towards one another, thanks to the bilateral dialogues. But this framework, which is now twenty years old, is no longer really suitable. It must be brought up to date and supplemented to take account of recent ecumenical developments. New ways must be found in multilateral work to facilitate better coordination between the bilateral dialogues of the different traditions.

The compatibility of the declarations and of "church communions" (page 386)

The situation is totally different in the fourth realm in which compatibility arises, namely when declarations and "church communions" have been officially approved by the synods and teaching
authorities of the churches. In this area, any kind of incompatibility would be unacceptable.

1) One dimension of this aspect of compatibility can be found in the Joint Declaration, which expresses a "consensus with nuances" between the Lutherans and the Catholics on the question of justification. It is quite evident that it has given rise to a certain discrepancy. What is the consequence of this agreement for the Reformed and Anglican Churches which have not yet been able to take this step with Rome but with whom the Lutherans share communion in Word and sacraments? The JD is an agreement between the Catholic and Lutheran traditions and can thus not simply be extended to include other families. But this does not mean that it is closed to them. On the contrary, they can and should benefit from its pioneer work. It is quite conceivable that, by virtue of an addition underlining their own particular emphases, the Reformed, Anglican or Methodist Churches could come to a similar agreement with Rome in the near future. Indeed, there is no theological incompatibility between the JD and the agreements that exist between the Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist and Anglican families.

It is probable, moreover, that the only possible method is the bilateral one adopted by the JD. Two traditions must do pioneer work to open up the way for the whole ecumenical movement. The experience of recent years shows that an approach, which is multilateral from the start, has practically no chance of succeeding, whereas a bilateral breakthrough can be broadened to embrace the multilateral realm. This has been demonstrated by the history of the relations between the Reformation churches[9]. Even when the question is raised "whether my friends' friends are my friends", the problem is not insurmountable.

[9] See Chapter VI.

All the declarations adopted by two churches demonstrate that each family is very loyal to all its partners.

2) The question becomes a bit more delicate in the case of the Reformation churches, where it has proved possible to arrive at declarations of church fellowship, communion in Word and sacraments and mutual recognition of ministries, which do not fully coincide with each other.

In practice we find different combinations that are surprising, because some communions have been able to achieve more visibility than others. The chapter dealing with this issue provides illustrations. What is the significance, for example, of church fellowship between Lutheran and Reformed churches in Europe or the United States for the Lutheran and Reformed churches of Africa, Asia or Latin America where such progress is not yet possible? Are the Lutheran churches in Asia, without having asked for it, in communion with the Reformed churches in Europe by virtue of the Leuenberg Agreement, given that they are in communion with the European Lutheran churches through the Lutheran World Federation? And what about the Baltic Lutheran churches which, have signed the Leuenberg Agreement and, through the Porvoo Common Statement, also share in an episcopal ministry common to Lutherans and Anglicans? Does this imply they have more communion with some than others? There are some amazing triangular relationships, which need some kind of clarification.

A careful analysis of the situation reveals that it is not so much a theological problem as a difference in time scale, nuances of reception where one and the same consensus can be received more rapidly and easily in some places than in others. This can be explained by the ecclesiology of the Reformation churches where final decisions cannot be taken by a Christian world communion but only by individual churches. With dialogue conclusions as a basis, international church organizations can make general recommendations to the individual churches belonging to these organizations for them to take concrete steps and declare themselves in church fellowship with other bodies. This ecclesiology inevitably entails a time lag in the reception process.

But this theological reason is not the only explanation. The time lag also relates to non-doctrinal factors such as different geographical and cultural situations and history, the sociological
situation or the fact of belonging to a majority or minority church, or even a weaker ecumenical motivation because of the absence of a particular partner in that context. The influence of these non-doctrinal factors is not regrettable. It goes hand in hand with every contemporary ecumenical development. But these factors are ambivalent; they can slow down progress or stimulate it[10].

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[10] On the question of non-doctrinal factors with their significance and consequences, reference can be made to the file published by GREDO (Groupe de recherches et d'études dogmatiques et oecuméniques des facultés de théologie de Strasbourg) in *Ist.* 38/1993, p.227-261, with contributions by M. Lienhard, N. Lossky, Ch. Wackenheim and H. Meyer.

Only a few years ago, the Lutheran-Reformed fellowship was limited to Europe. To reach the same stage, the North American churches took twenty-five years more and churches on other continents are still engaged in conversations. The theological groundwork has been done but the particular local situation causes a time lag in receiving it.

Non-doctrinal factors played a determining part in the declarations of communion drawn up by Lutherans and Anglicans. In the case of the Scandinavian Lutherans and the British Anglicans, the declaration of communion was aided by the fact that, in the 16th century, the transition to the Reformation was unbroken (no wars of religion, etc.). Nor did these countries undergo major political upheavals in the 20th century. The large national churches there have an "established" (majority) structure and they do not exist side by side in the same geographical setting. These similar sociological factors, as well as the special ties that have existed for many years between the Nordic and British churches, made a major contribution to the Porvoo agreement. All such non-doctrinal factors have made a valuable catalytic contribution to overcoming the theological problem of the break in the historic succession of the episcopate, and this progress could now facilitate the surmounting of the problem in other places, where the links were less easy in the past and have even given rise to conflict. The lack of special bonds between the British Isles and "continental" Europe also has something to do with the fact that the Meissen agreement, which preceded Porvoo, was unable to achieve as visible a unity[11]. The Reuilly agreement, on the other hand, shows that, despite a lack of special historical ties, progress towards a common exercise of the ministry is conceivable even if it is not yet possible. This agreement was reached later than the Porvoo declaration and benefited from the theological advances of the latter.

Naturally, the same non-doctrinal factors could prove to be obstacles. This would be the case if the declarations of church fellowship were limited for ever to specific situations and lost the necessary openness to other contexts. The process of "reception with nuances", which necessarily includes time lags, would then be blocked and incompatibility would be a reality. There is no reason why this should happen.

3) Such a "reception with nuances" in time is inevitable. It reflects different church situations and responds to different needs. It corresponds to a Reformation view of the Church in which the last word is not spoken by a central body but by the local churches. The time lags do not affect the fundamental issues. In all such cases, it is a matter of translating a fundamental consensus, which can then lead to new relationships in the practical life of the local churches[12]. It is hardly surprising that we should be taken aback

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11 See Chapter VI.

12 As far as we are aware, there is only one situation in which the problem of the compatibility of declarations of church fellowship is real. The Waldensian churches of Italy, which signed the Leuenberg Agreement, and the Methodist churches have drawn up an agreement with the Baptists in Italy including mutual recognition. The international Reformed/Baptist and Lutheran/Baptist dialogues have both come to the conclusion that church fellowship is not yet possible. The Italian example can be explained to a large extent by non-doctrinal factors (extreme minority situation, common difficulties with the Roman church). The specific situation has made a major contribution to their rapprochement. When one studies the wording of the agreement in detail, one finds that the theological bases need supplementing and that an agreement on the understanding of the sacrament of baptism has not really been reached (A. BIRMELÉ and J. TERME,

by certain time lags and find them abnormal. But the abnormality relates less to the time lag than to the situation, which these developments are attempting to overcome. The abnormality is the division, which is brought to an end by these declarations, more rapidly in some places than in others.

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eds.: *Accords et dialogues oecuméniques,* section V, p.55-64). However, this particular situation is a valuable incentive which could open a first door to the Baptist family, a church family which still tends to hover cautiously on the sidelines of any more specific, binding ecumenical commitment.

THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

LUTHERISCHER WELTBUND - FEDERACIÓN LUTERANA MUNDIAL - FÉDÉRATION LUTHÉRIENNE MONDIALE

General Secretariat - Office for Ecumenical Affairs

To:
The Anglican Consultative Council
The World Alliance of Reformed Churches
The Commission on Faith and Order

10 June, 2000

It is a pleasure hereby to invite you to send two participants to a day consultation to take place in Geneva on

Friday 25 August 2000 from 09:00 to 17:00.

The consultation, which will also have 4-5 Lutheran participants, is planned as an exploratory meeting arranged by the LWF Office for Ecumenical Affairs on

The ecumenical profile of Lutheran churches relating simultaneously to churches of episcopal and non-episcopal traditions.

This exploration is a part of a part of a larger study process on "Lutheran Identity in Ecumenical Relationships", which is an emerging interdepartmental project involving also the LWF Department for Theology and Studies and the Institute for Ecumenical Research, Strasbourg. The theme for the first phase of that project is *Lutheran perspectives on the historic episcopate.*

The reason for taking up this topic of study is that several Lutheran churches, members of the LWF, are presently in full communion, or possibly in the process of entering into such communion, with Anglican churches and Reformed churches simultaneously. These Lutheran churches see their position as compatible with the understanding of the church and its unity as explained in the Lutheran confessional writings. Questions related to the "coherence" of this ecumenical approach have been treated in various contexts in the 1980's and 1990's.

In addition to the agreements of full communion mentioned, agreements have also been reached in other contexts between Anglican, Lutheran and Reformed churches together, reflecting a high level of mutual recognition.

Some Lutheran churches have maintained the historic episcopate since the time of the Reformation, while others have not. Some Lutheran churches are in the process of recovering this tradition. No Reformed churches have maintained the historic episcopate, while all Anglican churches have. According to the Lambeth Quadrilateral of the Anglican Communion, the historic episcopate locally adapted is considered a necessary condition for church unity.

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The position adopted by some Lutheran churches is that the historic episcopate is of value as a sign of unity in the Christian church, and that Lutheran churches, which do not have that sign, are free to adopt it. At the same time, the historic episcopate is not - as such – considered to be a *necessary* sign for church unity in the Lutheran tradition.

While much work has already been done regionally on the issue of the coherence of the ecumenical approach of Lutheran churches entering simultaneously into fellowship with Anglican and Reformed churches, much work is still awaiting to be done on the level of the relevant world communions in their relationships.

Questions that have been raised to the position of those Lutheran churches that allow for full communion with Anglican and Reformed churches simultaneously has sometimes described as "a problem that the Lutherans have". If this position represents a problem, however, it would not be a problem only for the Lutherans, but for a large part of the ecumenical movement. In that case, it would be a challenge for the LWF, together with its sister communions, to see what can be done to clarify, and possibly resolve, some of the difficulties involved.

The aim of the event is to take stock of the present "status discussionis" of the major issue at hand, and to give indications on how continued work in this area might best proceed on the international level.

The issue of the coherence, or compatibility, of ecumenical agreements is also one that is focused on in the Forum on Bilateral dialogues organized by the Faith and Order Commission at the request of the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions. Current plans for the next session of the Bilateral Forum indicate that this issue will be a specific topic there. Considerations emerging from the consultation to which you are hereby invited could possibly feed into the next session of the Bilateral Forum, as one of the facets of the wider issue.

The consultation could also contribute to the eventual processing by the LWF of the outcome of the Anglican – Lutheran International Working Group and the Joint Lutheran – Reformed Working Group. This brief consultation will be preceded on 24 August by a day consultation of the Lutheran participants.

The LWF is ready to cover expenses for travel and accommodation. Hotel reservations have been made for those expected to travel to Geneva. Further details will follow later.

For your scheduling it would be a pleasure if we could all meet for dinner at 19:30 on Thursday 24 August. Return for those who travel can take place in the evening of the 25th or the morning of the 26th.

Thank you for your considering this invitation.

Sven Oppegaard
Assistant General Secretary
for Ecumenical Affairs

APPENDIX

Overview of some relevant documents

The Leuenberg Agreement, between Reformation Churches in Europe,1973. Verlag Otto Lembeck, 1993.

The Niagara Report. Report of the Anglican – Lutheran Consultation on Episcopé 1987. Published for the ACC and the LEF by Church House Publishing 1988.

Toward Church Fellowship. Report of the Lutheran – Reformed Joint Commission. Geneva 1989.

Communio and Dialogue. Compatibility – Convergence – Consensus. A Report from the Consultation on Ecumenical Dialogues, Venice 1991. Edited by Eugene L. Brand. LWF 1992.

The Meissen Agreement. Texts. The Council for Christian Unity of the General Synod of the Church of England, 1992.

The Implications of Concordat of Agreement and A Common Calling. The Report of a Consultation on "Full Communion", Florida 1993. ELCA 1993.

Together in Mission and Ministry. The Porvoo Common Statement with Essays on Church and Ministry in Northern Europe. Church House Publishing 1993.

Leuenberg, Meissen, Porvoo. Consultation between the churches of the Leuenberg Fellowship and the churches involved in the Meissen Agreement and the Porvoo Agreement. Liebfrauenberg 1995. Verlag Otto Lembeck 1996.

Anglican – Lutheran Ecumenical Bibliography. By Michael Root. Published in 1997, distributed by the Anglican – Lutheran Society.

A Formula of Agreement between the ELCA, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Reformed Church in America and the United Church of Christ on entering into full communion on the basis of A Common Calling. 1998. Available with supporting literature through the ELCA.

Called to Common Mission. Adopted by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly 1999 in view of full communion with the Episcopal Church. Available with supporting literature through the ELCA.

Called to Witness and Service. The Reuilly Common Statement, between the French Lutheran and Reformed Churches and the British and Irish Anglican Churches. Church House Publishing 1999.

Rowing in One Boat. A Common Reflection on Lutheran – Reformed Relations Worldwide. John Knox Series, Geneva 1999.

Consultation on 'LUTHERAN IDENTITY IN ECUMENICAL RELATIONS'

Aide-mémoire of discussions on 25th August 2000 at LWF, Geneva

The Rt Revd Dr David Tustin:

As part of a wider study-project on the theme of 'Lutheran Identity' the LWF Office for Ecumenical Affairs invited Canon David Hamid and myself, as representatives of the Anglican Communion, to take part in a consultation on '*the ecumenical profile of Lutheran Churches in relating simultaneously to Churches of episcopal and non-episcopal traditions*'. This was held at the headquarters of the Lutheran World Federation in Ecumenical Centre at Geneva on 25th August 2000.

Participants

Lutheran:	The Revd Sven Oppegaard (LWF staff), chair Prof Dr André Birmelé (Ecumenical Institute, Strasbourg) The Revd Dr Randy Lee (ELCA staff, Chicago) Prof Dr Mickey Mattox (Ecumenical Institute, Strasbourg) The Revd Olaf Fykse Tveit (Norway)
World Bodies:	Dr Thomas Best (on behalf of Faith & Order, WCC) The Revd Páraic Réamonn (World Alliance of Reformed Chs)
Anglican:	The Rt Revd Dr David Tustin (co-chair, ALIWG) The Revd Canon David Hamid (co-secretary, ALIWG)

1. Now that bilateral Anglican-Lutheran (A/L) talks were producing concrete regional agreements, the question inevitably arose as to when would this produce results at world level? Ishmael Noko had raised this point during the 1998 Lambeth Conference, but there was no easy step to achieving it. It was noted that the A/L International Working Group (ALIWG) had already begun addressing this issue and its implications for both world communions.

2 Sven Oppegaard pointed out that little controversy had been aroused amongst Lutherans by 'Leuenberg' (1973), or more recently by 'Meissen' (1988) and 'Reuilly' (1999) involving Reformed and Anglican partners. These agreements had been useful steps. However, 'Porvoo' (1992) and 'Called to Common Mission' (CCM, 1999) had sparked off heated discussions amongst other Lutherans. These reports had brought to light tensions within the Lutheran family. Whilst many Lutherans felt that embracing the historic episcopate was the only way forward ecumenically, others argued that alternative ways of establishing church fellowship were equally valid and that the historic episcopate, even if valuable, was not necessary. Were those agreements which involved the historic episcopate coherent with the other agreements in which Lutherans participated? For example, the Church of Norway had already committed itself to 'Porvoo', yet was also about to sign 'Leuenberg' and in its protocol of November 1999 had expounded the theological compatibility of its position. Did the Lutheran Confession provide the basis for such a comprehensive approach?

3. Existing documentation on Lutheran identity was briefly reviewed, and the range of ecumenical discussions in which Lutherans were currently engaged was summarised. The Lutheran participants then gave a quick overview of the papers they had shared with each other on the previous day.

4. Randy Lee recalled that the policy document 'Ecumenism – the Vision of the ELCA' (1991) had been a mandate for all-round ecumenism, with full communion as the goal. It had led to a wide range of ecumenical partnerships, of which those with Presbyterians, Reformed, United Churches of Christ, Moravians and Episcopalians had already been approved. An important pre-requisite had been sufficient agreement on the basics of the faith (cf CA 7). The A/L Concordat (as amended in CCM) would become effective from January 2001, and during that year about twenty new Lutheran bishops were expected to be consecrated in historic succession. Only three congregations had left ELCA over CCM, and it was largely sociological factors stemming from different waves of immigration which underlay this. In the USA fresh energy had been released by the signing of the agreement on Justification between LWF and the Roman Catholic Church, and the tenth round of L/RC talks was about to start.

5. Olav Fykse Tveit recalled some illuminating comments by Bishop Bergrav fifty years ago on church/state problems in Norway during World War II. The majority of bishops and pastors had resigned appointments authorised by the pro-Nazi government, and had claimed that their ministries were legitimate 'according to the apostolic tradition'. After this important defining moment the apostolicity of the Church of Norway's existing ministry was a basic datum for the subsequent dialogue with Anglicans. Though 'Leuenberg' had been favourably received in 1975-76, it could not be signed then as the Norwegian General Synod did not come into existence until 1984. Since then 'Porvoo' and relations with the Methodists had been approved, as well as 'Leuenberg' recently – all on the basis of the Lutheran Confession (CA 7). The reactions from Finland and Sweden to Norway's joining the Leuenberg Fellowship were hard to understand. The historic episcopate had not been a big issue in Norway, as there was already a strong sense of historical continuity. Queries were raised about the theology of 'sign' and the possible danger of creating closed or mutually exclusive blocks of churches, but these concerns were felt to have been adequately addressed.

6. Mickey Mattox reviewed the terminology 'esse', 'bene esse' and 'plene esse', and concluded that these categories were unhelpful in a Lutheran context and were best avoided. There was danger in identifying the 'esse' of the church with any one particular element in isolation. In Lutheran confessional documents much ecclesiology was implicit, and it was inappropriate to press the insistence on essential elements. Whilst provisional solutions had been adopted in emergency situations, this was not sufficient reason to regard them as normative. David Hamid asked how important Lutheran confessional identity was. In response the Lutheran delegates pointed to the force of various living traditions, which were a reality that had to be acknowledged - see also below, paragraph 8(a).

7. André Birmelé tabled an English translation of excerpts from his book 'La communion ecclésiale: progrès oecuméniques et enjeux méthodologiques'. He argued that the dialogues in which Lutherans were currently engaged were mutually compatible, but that getting out of the fundamental anomaly of disunity was bound to take time. On the basis of CA 7 mutual recognition of churches as belonging to the Una Sancta ought to be tantamount to communion. In dialogue with Anglicans the main difficulty lay in the different levels of communion – i.e. the greater or lesser visibility of communion, but a positive feature (common to 'Meissen', 'Porvoo' and 'Reuilly') was the insistence on being committed to structures of mutual commitment, whereby the participating churches could be *seen* to be one. In dialogue the Reformed the main difficulty lay in achieving a greater measure of structured visibility than 'Leuenberg' had yet achieved. How could mutual accountability become a reality? After communion had been declared, where was catholicity to be seen? How could one demonstrate that the local congregation was the expression of the world-wide church?

8. During the afternoon session discussion ranged around the following key issues:

   (a) Lutheran identity was acknowledged to be fundamentally that of the Una Sancta, not some separate confession as such. Extra elements had become important in recent decades, such as synodical structures and the ministry of bishops within them. Interaction between bishops, pastors and laity had become indispensable. Rather than focussing on what essentials could be regarded as a minimum, it would be more fruitful to explore what made for the plenitude or fulness of church life. A clearer sense of identity as a 'Lutheran communion' had emerged in recent decades. The notion of 'sister churches', proposed in 'Facing Unity' (1985), could be relevant. There were several items of common agenda between the Anglican and Lutheran communions. How can the right balance be struck between provincial autonomy and global instruments? In the perspective of the Una Sancta how provisional is Anglicanism or Lutheranism? If we are meant to make our distinctive contributions, are we being too ecumenical for our own good? Since evolution towards a 'communion of communions' seems to be happening, how can we have a more committed sense of what it means to be a 'communion'? How can binding decisions be made? How can the personal ministry of bishops contribute towards holding diverse interests and tendencies together within the confessional family? Such issues as these could be explored together.

   (b) Relations with the Roman Catholic Church were seen as needing to enter a new phase. There was strong disappointment among many Lutherans that the signing of the joint declaration on Justification had not led to eucharistic sharing, but nothing further seemed likely to happen until ministry questions could be tackled afresh. The report 'Facing Unity' had been largely ignored by Lutherans because it discussed their ministries in terms of a 'defectus'. Was the RC model the only one which could serve a basis for dialogue?

   (c) Terminology about 'communion' was problematic, and needed further thought. The shorthand expression 'the Porvoo Communion' was unhelpful in appearing to suggest a separate or closed grouping. In describing a

relationship of 'full communion' the Porvoo Common Statement had deliberately avoided that phrase because of its ambiguity. Even 'full communion' could be impaired, and beyond 'full communion' were still further ecumenical objectives. The expression 'full visible unity' had assumed greater importance in recent years. How could it be made clear that this did not imply organic merger? The Reuilly Common Statement (chapter VII) had been prudent in spelling out what further practical steps were needed.

(d) Pastoral oversight (episcopé) was seen as not just a question of bishops. Other signs or instruments were involved in exercising oversight. How could episcopé be shared ecumenically, and made more visible in relation to particular localities? Did it matter that it was visible? How could mutual accountability become a reality? Realism was needed as to the speed at which progress was possible on these points.

(e) Other concerns were voiced by the non-Lutherans observers. Páraic Réamonn pointed out that, if increasing numbers of Lutheran churches became episcopal, there was a danger that Reformed partners could feel marginalised. David Hamid and I made three comments. (i) There was a need for patience with those holding minority views, and for efforts to live together in legitimate diversity. (ii) Relations with Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy were integral to the ecumenical agenda, and needed to remain part of the total horizon. (iii) There could be value in continued monitoring and theological reflection on the distinctively Lutheran experience of the exercise of the episcopal office.

DAVID TUSTIN

November 2000

Concerning LWF ecumenical profile

MEMORANDUM

From: Tom Best
To: Oppegaard, Sven
Date: Wednesday, 13 September, 2000

Dear Sven,

It has taken me some time to get back to this, due to the ecumenical "excitement" of the past 3 weeks. But I want to thank you for the invitation to attend, on behalf of Faith and Order, the LWF meeting on its "ecumenical profile" in relation to churches of both the episcopal and non-episcopal traditions. This is an issue which many churches face as they enter into more and more ecumenical discussions and agreements, and it is encouraging to see a confessional family taking it up.

I found this a helpful gathering especially for:

(1) the clarification from the ELCA of the historic episcopate as a possible, but not a necessary, aspect of the church;

(2) the clarification from the ELCA - supported by the Anglican Bishop Tustin - that ELCA pastors choosing to be ordained "within the historic episcopate" would "receive" that via Lutheran - and not Episcopalian/Anglican - sources, even if Episcopalian or Anglican bishops were present. (I have to say this is not what I have heard from some Anglican sources in the U.S.A.);

(3) the development of the situation in Norway, with its interactions with the Methodists there in particular;

(4) the interaction with the representatives from the ACC and WARC, especially the cautions raised by WARC;

(5) the discussion of terminology ("full communion" vs. "[full] visible unity"), which is directly relevant to our current work in Faith and Order.

I would urge you in your further work to consider the following:

1. The understanding of "unity". As an ecumenical observer I would ask: how does this day's discussion relate to the notion of reconciled diversity? Unless I am mistaken, this is still the official LWF "model" of the unity which we are seeking. So I found it curious that the term

hardly, if ever, came up during our conversations. And it may be obvious to Lutherans that the relations with Anglicans on the one hand, and Reformed on the other, can both be understood as working within the framework of reconciled diversity. To the rest of us it may not be so clear.

2. The meaning of "mutual accountability". During the day there was much talk of the "accountability" of the churches to one another, but no clarity at all about what forms this should take. How can the accountability be made visible and effective? There may be a level of accountability which can be expressed only in new structural forms, not in the still-divided forms - however "reconciled" they may be - of the present-day confessions.

3. The notion of "common decision-making" as a particularly potent expression of mutual accountability. How can the churches move to a situation in which common deliberation and action are the norm, rather than special cases making, as it were, an ecumenical "point"? How can the churches - as sovereign bodies - put themselves under the discipline of decisions made truly in common with others?

4. The experience of the united and uniting churches, not least those including Lutheran but also Reformed churches. These churches will have special insights, perhaps wisdom, to offer. They have, after all, taken "mutual accountability" to the point of entering into a common ecclesial structure. The meeting with the Evangelische Kirche der Union is a good beginning, but other steps can be taken.

As Faith and Order we look forward to accompanying your process. And we would like to incorporate these concerns into our planning for a next international consultation of united and uniting churches. Let us keep in touch about that.

Thanks again for your invitation, and with best wishes,

Tom Best
Faith and Order / WCC

cc: Falconer, Alan; McComish, Carolyn; VanBeek, Hubert

Report from Olav Fykse Tveit, Research Scholar,
The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology, Oslo

LWF Consultation on
The Ecumenical Profile of Lutheran churches relating simultaneously to churches of episcopal and non-episcopal traditions
24-25 August, 2000, in Geneva

The small group (5 Lutherans the first day, supplemented by two Anglican and two Reformed representatives the next day) was appropriate to get a starting point for this study project. The presentations of the processes and arguments of two churches making agreements of church fellowship with Anglican and Reformed churches (ELCA/CoN) was supplemented by comments, questions and papers red by two professors from Strasbourg (Mattox and Birmele). My presentation is enclosed.

In my notes I have underlined the following points and perspectives:

- Lutheran "profile" or "basis" is probably a better perspective than "Lutheran Identity".
- The Lutheran churches are now involved in ecumenical processes where the historical dimension of the Church (and the division of the Church) is taken into account, more than what's usually done in our Lutheran theological reflections. This is a field which could be more explored in Lutheran theology, and where we probably have something to be learned from other traditions. This is more important theologically than the not very useful label "adiaforon" suggests.
- This historical dimension should not be a matter in Luth-Angl relations only, also the historical reasons why the Reformed developed their presbyterial/synodical structures should be discussed.
- The Reformed participants did find the signatory explanation of Ch of Norway clear, useful and important for the further reflections of these issues.
- The historical episopate is not something Lutheran churches should "take over" to please the Anglican partners. Lutherans should find it's own ecumenical understanding of the issues involved (here the ELCA has done a job already). The historical epirscopate in Lutheran churches must have other arguments than pleasing a partner. The Anglicans do not want this to be a motif, either.
- The historical episcopate has different aspects, which must be reflected in the further process, not only the issue of inter-church mutual recognition or the authenticity of ordained ministry. The more comprehensive theme of visibility, or rather: accountability, in inter-church relation might be a more fruitful framework than the historical episcopate. Otherwise we might be playing at the home field of other denominations in the whole process, and that was not the idea?
- We should raise the question of ecclesial power in the issue of historical episcopate. Cf. the last document from the Vatican!
- A wider Lutheran participation is important in the pursuit of this study, to explore the real and (NB) the not so real differences between Lutheran churches in this matter.

Oslo, 05 Sept 2000

Olav Fykse Tveit

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Prof. Dr. Mickey L. MATTOX

5 October 2000

Rev. Sven Oppegaard
Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Affairs
Lutheran World Federation
P. O. Box 2100
150, route de Ferney
CH-1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland

Dear Sven:

Greetings from Strasbourg! Per our conversation this morning, I am forwarding to you via email a copy of the brief paper I read at the "Lutheran Identity in Ecumenical Relations" conference held in Geneva, August 24-25.

As I indicated in the paper, I think we will do well not to lean any too heavily on the distinction between *esse* and *bene esse* in the process of thinking through the questions raised by some of the recent ecumenical decisions made by some LWF member churches. On the one hand, it makes sense to think carefully about which Christian truths are nearest to the heart of the faith (or highest in the hierarchy of truths) and in that sense "essential" to the faith. On the other hand, I would also want to insist that the very process of reflecting on the truths of the faith already presumes our 'social location,' so to speak, in the community of faith. Thinking about the essence or core of the faith thus occurs within the context of the faith itself.

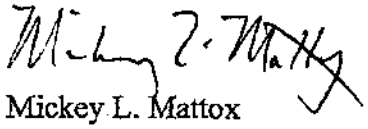
Applied to the problem of the 'historic episcopacy,' this means that our thinking about this issue should not begin from ground zero, but should assume already the church as the empirical and historical reality which itself makes possible Christian reflection on the church. In fact, the Lutheran confessions themselves presuppose this context. Thus, as I indicated at the meeting, I would prefer to mount a strong argument for the importance of the historic episcopacy. Historic episcopacy is a time-honored, visible sign of unity, one recognized and revered by the vast majority of the world's Christians—now, and in the past. We should resist our tendency to regularize the emergency situation that pertained in the sixteenth century, in recognition that the Lutheran movement in its original impulse took the episcopal structure of the church for granted as a hallowed tradition.

Of course, as I indicated at the conference, I recognize that arguments "for" the historic episcopacy based on the assumption that it is an *adiaphoron* make a certain amount of sense from a church-political point of view. Certainly, many Lutherans view church polity as an indifferent matter, and can on that basis justify simultaneous relations of full communion with both episcopal and non-episcopal churches. However, setting out the historic episcopacy as part of a smorgasbord of options Lutherans may in their Christian freedom either choose or refuse (because they don't touch the essence of the faith) strikes me as a move that will in the long run prove problematic. This is a critical issue that must be addressed when considering the problem of simultaneous relations of full communion between Lutherans and episcopal/non-episcopal churches.

We should be encouraged to do so, I believe, especially when we note that in ecumenical dialogue the Roman church has been willing to ratchet back its claim that the episcopal structure exists *de iure divino* to a more sober *ab antiquo*. The latter phrase suggests a theological engagement with history. I hope it won't sound entirely like special pleading for my academic specialization if I observe simply that we Lutherans need likewise to reconsider the problem of history and the church, and think carefully through its theological significance.

Thanks again for including me in the project, and I look forward to seeing you in Strasbourg October 18.

Blessings in Christ,



Mickey L. Mattox

MEISSEN, PORVOO & OTHER ANGLICAN-LUTHERAN AGREEMENTS

Briefing by the Rt Revd Dr David Tustin (UK)
22 July 2000, Virginia Theological Seminary, USA

In this briefing my task is to set in context the Meissen and Porvoo Agreements from Europe. I shall try to summarise them and show they are working out in practice; to indicate their similarities and differences; and to relate them to current Anglican-Lutheran developments world-wide.

A. Stages towards Full Communion

If we look back over the long and fruitful history of Anglican-Lutheran dialogue since 1909, we can identify *four* distinct stages which go beyond the level of courtesy and informal co-operation:

1 **Dialogue** - i.e. when delegates who have been officially appointed by their churches engage in formal theological conversations.

2 **Reception** – i.e. when the results of dialogue are laid before the authorities of the appointing churches for study, debate and decision. If the outcome is positive, this may lead to:

3 **Interim Sharing** – i.e. when the *formal* relationships between those churches are changed in a partial or limited way. Such growing fellowship may then lead, after further dialogue and reception, to a fourth step:

4 **Full Communion** – i.e. when church members and ordained ministers are inter-changed, and there is ongoing consultation on matters of common concern.

Within this simple framework we can categorise the Meissen Agreement as *stage three*, comparable to the Interim Sharing here in the USA since 1982 between the Episcopal Church and the Lutheran bodies which now form the ELCA. By contrast, the Porvoo Agreement exemplifies *stage four*, comparable to 'Called to Common Mission' (CCM) in the USA or the Waterloo proposals in Canada. Let us examine Meissen and Porvoo in turn.

B. The Meissen Agreement

Explanation: *Any* conversation is bound to be coloured by the identity and circumstances of its participants. When the formal dialogue between the Church of England and the main German Protestant Churches began in 1987, it suffered from a number of handicaps. Our countries had fought each other in two World Wars, yet there was a growing public feeling in favour of Anglo-German reconciliation, which provided an extra dynamic in our quest for visible Christian unity. From the outset we English delegates found ourselves in dialogue with those from two sharply contrasting German states: the so-called 'Democratic Republic' (formerly East Germany) and the 'Federal Republic' (formerly West Germany). All of us were drawn into a complex process of trying to understand one another not only across the political divide symbolised by the Berlin wall, but also in regard to widely differing church

structures. The Church of England is one church, and simply Anglican. However, in the two separate parts of Germany we were dealing not with a single church, but with federal structures comprising various Regional Churches (Landeskirchen) – some Lutheran, some Reformed, some United on a confessional basis, and others United on an administrative basis. It was no easy matter to bridge this political, confessional and structural diversity – not to mention the differences of language and terminology.

Despite this, in God's good providence our dialogue got off to a flying start. We were able to benefit from several previous achievements, of which I will briefly mention four:

(a) The first was the series of informal talks in the period spanning the mid 60's to mid 80's between the Church of England and the EKD in the Federal Republic. In particular, the most recent talks at Schloss Schwanberg in 1986 had directly paved the way for the official conversations which led to 'Meissen'. A growing sense of fellowship was generated by these discussions, by various local twinnings, and by the presence of some Anglican congregations in West Germany and some German diaspora congregations in England.

(b) These contacts with West Germany were parallelled by a few strong personal links with East Germany, notably between the cathedrals and church leaders of Coventry and Dresden - cities which had suffered a similar fate of saturation bombing during World War II.

(c) Thirdly, we were greatly helped by being able to draw on valuable ecumenical documents. At world level there was the 1972 Pullach Report of Anglican-Lutheran dialogue; the 1982 Lima text of the WCC on 'Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry'; the 1984 Anglican-Reformed document entitled 'God's Reign and our Unity'; and, most importantly, the as yet unpublished Niagara Report on 'Episcopé' which was available to us in draft. At European level there had also been the 1982 Helsinki Report, containing useful insights into our common European heritage.

(d) Fourthly, in England the recent approval of the so-called 'Ecumenical Canons' [B.43 & B.44] provided for the first time a sound legal basis for a limited measure of liturgical and sacramental co-operation between episcopal and non-episcopal churches.

All these existing ecumenical texts were ready-made tools in our hands, and with them we fashioned a new *shape* of document, a model which has since proved serviceable in other contexts. What are the features of this **Meissen model**?

It took the form of a Common Statement, mainly recording points of agreement, but also noting remaining differences that still needed to be resolved. It set out some basic theological principles covering God's purposes for the whole human race, the church as an instrument of the Kingdom of God, and the nature and goal of its unity. Beside these timeless principles it also referred to the specific historical context of this particular dialogue, and the degree of co-operation already shared. It next summarised the main areas of doctrine on which our churches were sufficiently agreed to provide a basis for closer unity. The document then culminated in a formal Joint Declaration [paragraph 17], the only section of the text on which synods were required to vote. This key section contained two different kinds of clauses: four *Acknowledgements* about one another's churches, followed by ten *Commitments* to take

specific next steps together. To this was appended an implementation agreement, which included setting up a joint continuation body to foster common action in the future.

If this Meissen model sounds familiar, it is a measure of the extent to which it has commended itself as a basis for other subsequent agreements, such as 'Porvoo', the 'Fetter Lane' Anglican-Moravian statement, the 'Reuilly' Anglo-French accord, and our preliminary talks with the Methodist Church.

The title of the Meissen Common Statement was significant: *'On the Way to Visible Unity'*. It was clearly seen as an interim stage on a longer journey, with the explicit commitment to press on further. 'Meissen' had both a strength and a limitation. It marked a real step forward theologically because it contained the unambiguous acknowledgement that one another's churches **'truly participate in the apostolic mission of the people of God'**; that both episcopal and non-episcopal forms of oversight are **'a visible sign of the church's unity and continuity in apostolic life, mission and ministry'**; and that one another's ordained ministries are **'given by God and instruments of His grace'**. Here was progress indeed! Its limitation was that it did not resolve (nor did it try to) the difference between episcopal and non-episcopal ministries, and therefore fell short of achieving the full interchangeability of ministers. It was obvious to us at the time that this would take many more years' work, and we settled for a limited interim goal.

Practical outworking: Following its synodical acceptance in both countries 'Meissen' was publicly celebrated in 1991, Germany having by that time been re-united. Since then the agreement has worked out well in practice. What can be done within its provisions should not be underestimated. For example, German Lutheran or Reformed pastors may be invited to celebrate the eucharist according to their own practice and forms of service in an Anglican church building, and vice versa, as well as to hold joint worship with us. Many people do not realise that this much is already possible. More than half of the dioceses in the Church of England now have a regular partnership with an equivalent unit of the EKD, and there is a steady trickle of exchanges between theological students, clergy and church members. In both countries substantial theological libraries have been established for the study of each other's traditions. Major consultations are held every four years between our synodical leaders, including bishops, clergy and laity. Theological conversations continue with great earnestness and, despite some frustration and impatience, there is much goodwill and steady growth in mutual understanding. The steam-pressure is building up to find ways of moving beyond the present interim stage, though this likely to take some time yet. It has been described as a "robust relationship" by Bishop Michael Bourke, who co-chairs the continuation body known as the Meissen Commission. A major limitation remains the small number of English people who speak German. So much for 'Meissen' and its practical outworking..

C. The Porvoo Agreement

Explanation: Now let us turn to 'Porvoo', which has already taken that further step to Full Communion. Here, by contrast, we were dealing with different partners and different histories. All of them are solely Lutheran and cover a single country, which made matters simpler. It needs to be remembered that the dialogue had started much earlier. It began in Sweden in 1909; then extended to Finland, Estonia and Latvia in the 1930's; and after World

War II embraced Denmark, Iceland and Norway as well. By the mid 50's various interim agreements were already in place. Our task at the end of the 80's was to renew these earlier piecemeal agreements, and to move our relations with all of the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches up to the same level as each other and forwards into Full Communion. We were also acutely concerned to affirm and support our partners in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, who were just emerging from fifty years' attrition under illegal occupation by the USSR, and whose countries needed welcoming back into their rightful place as independent states in the mainstream of Europe.

An important catalyst for these conversations was Resolution 4.5 of the 1988 Lambeth Conference which urged:

> **'that the most recent convergence on apostolic ministry achieved in the *Niagara Report* (1987) ... prompts us to move towards the fullest possible ecclesial recognition and the goal of full communion'.**

The Niagara Consultation had taken a new approach to episcopé in the light of the church's mission and of the ministry of the whole People of God. The clear green light from the Lambeth Conference encouraged us to go ahead in receiving these insights and applying them to our own situation in Northern Europe. In fact, all five Nordic Lutheran Churches (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) had known only an episcopal form of church leadership for about 1,000 years, and at the Reformation had consciously preserved their ancient episcopal sees. Estonia and Latvia had once been part of the Swedish empire in its heyday, and in these independent states historic episcopal succession had been re-introduced in the 1920's and subsequently lost and regained. The tiny Lutheran minority church in Lithuania followed suit in 1976. (For details see *'Together in Mission & Ministry'*, pp 109-123, published 1993, Church House Press, London).

Thus all eight of these Nordic and Baltic Churches already bore a strong family resemblance to our Anglican provinces of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Moreover, they shared with us not only much common history and identity, but also a closely similar mission context. They were our natural partners, and so we built on the Meissen model and augmented it with substantial new material on 'Episcopacy in the Service of the Apostolicity of the Church' (Porvoo Common Statement, chapter IV). We reached a new common understanding about apostolicity as being primarily a characteristic of the whole church, and about the role of the apostolic ministry within it as being to serve the church's mission 'in the light of the Gospel'. We argued that the time had now come when all of our churches could affirm together the value and use of the sign of historic episcopal succession. We did not impose pre-conditions on each other, but spoke rather of our *freedom* to do what would serve the cause of the Gospel and promote greater unity in mission. We said: 'By the sharing of our life and ministries in closer visible unity, we shall be strengthened for the continuation of Christ's mission in the world'. This enabled us to propose, in a key passage from paragraph 57, as follows:

> **'... those churches in which the sign has at some time <u>not</u> been used are free to recognise the value of the sign, and should embrace it without denying their own apostolic continuity... those churches in which the sign <u>has</u> been used are free to recognise the reality of the episcopal office, and should affirm the apostolic continuity of those churches in which the sign of episcopal succession has at some time <u>not</u> been used'.** *(My underlining).*

This was a major break-through, and the Porvoo Declaration [paragraph 58] offered a basis for those churches who would approve it to move forwards into Full Communion. The format was similar to the Meissen Declaration, but the content more far-reaching with six Acknowledgements and ten Commitments. This was endorsed by the four British and Irish Anglican Churches, and by six of the Lutheran Churches - not Denmark or Latvia so far, though the door remains open to them. It was publicly celebrated in 1996, and established a communion of some 40 million Christians in ten countries of Northern Europe.

Practical outworking: In practice the Porvoo Communion is held together in various ways: by a cycle of intercessions used in public worship; by a small Contact Group that meets annually; by four-yearly gatherings of church leaders and occasional meetings of the Primates; by mutual participation in consecrating bishops; but most of all by the growing network of contacts and exchanges between the partner churches.

To illustrate how this works out, here are some examples from the diocese of Lincoln to which I belong. Because we have a shortage of clergy, under 'Porvoo' we have so far recruited seven priests from Sweden and two from Iceland for posts which could not otherwise be filled. Each priest came initially for several months, and several had their tenure extended – in one case for seven years. They are seen not as ecumenical visitors, but as 'partners in mission'. Whilst continuing as Lutherans they become fully incorporated into our diocesan life: vowing their canonical obedience to the Bishop of Lincoln, being licensed and paid on exactly the same basis as our other clergy, and enjoying full membership and voting rights in synodical meetings. They are a real help to us, and an enrichment to our life.

It is worth pointing out that both Icelandic colleagues happened to have been ordained by a previous Bishop of Iceland whose consecration was not in historic succession but since, in keeping with ecclesiology of 'Porvoo', we acknowledge the Church of Iceland to be a sister church *as it is*, we are therefore able to accept those priests without re-ordination.

As to traffic in the opposite direction Lincoln diocese seconded a priest for three months to work in Iceland, though for language reasons this was only among the English-speaking population. It has to be admitted that lack of foreign language skills is our greatest handicap. In both directions several groups of clergy have paid short study-visits. Moreover, the Archdeacon who worked with me joined Bishop Tord Harlin for two weeks' visitation at Gävle (Sweden), and the Bishop's Assistant from Uppsala (the Revd Eva Norëus) spent three weeks in our diocese studying the pastoral and administrative structures. Later the whole of the Diocesan Board from Uppsala came across to confer with an equivalent group in Lincoln, and we have also had exchanges of parish youth groups and lay parishioners. I hope this is enough to indicate that 'Porvoo' is certainly a living reality for many of our parishes, even though it involves crossing the North Sea. Several English dioceses have twinning links of this kind.

D. Similarities & Differences

In the light of all that I have said so far, let me try to summarise the similarities and differences between the Meissen and Porvoo Agreements. First, the *similarities*:

1 Each is expressed in a Common Statement, culminating in a concise joint Declaration which contains both Acknowledgements and Commitments.
2 Each is based on a sufficient agreement in faith (largely derived from Niagara, chapter III – *'The Truths we share'*).
3 There is an agreed goal of visible unity.
4 Points of disagreement or needing further exploration are identified.
5 The particular history of the churches concerned is addressed.
6 There is a mission perspective and a commitment to practical implementation.
7 Each represents a partnership across the sea in which language differences are a major constraint.
8 Each includes a specific willingness to be open to wider ecumenical involvement, and in no sense creates a 'closed club'.

Nevertheless, there are *differences*. As compared with 'Porvoo' which establishes Full Communion between episcopally ordered Anglican and Lutheran Churches, 'Meissen' differs in three main ways:

1 It also embraces the Reformed and United elements of the EKD, which itself is not a church but a federation of Landeskirchen.
2 It contains no agreement on the office of bishop or historic episcopal succession.
3 Whilst ordained ministries are mutually recognised as 'given by God and instruments of His grace', they are not yet reconciled or fully interchangeable.

For these reasons the Meissen relationship is one of Interim Sharing (i.e. stage three) though - as I stressed earlier – there are many contacts in practice and there is a strong commitment moving on further.

E. Anglican-Lutheran relations in other parts of the world

I have been asked to comment briefly on current Anglican-Lutheran developments in other parts of the world. Both of our two world communions have articulated their policy at global level. The *1997 LWF Assembly* in Hong Kong noted with thanksgiving the Anglican-Lutheran agreements already in place; it encouraged ever deepening relationships; it renewed its commitment to the goal of Full Communion; and it urged member churches to take appropriate steps towards the realisation of that goal. In similar vein the *1998 Lambeth Conference* rejoiced at Porvoo and Meissen; it expressed positive hopes for the revised concordat (CCM) in the USA, for the Waterloo proposals in Canada, and for the Reuilly proposals between France and Britain & Ireland; it kept the door ajar for Denmark and Latvia to sign up to Porvoo if they wished; it made special mention of Africa and Australia (to which I will turn next); and as for other regions of the world it 'encouraged further steps towards agreement in faith, eucharistic sharing and common mission on the way to the goal of full visible unity' [Resolution IV.16g]. Thus the broad thrust of policy on both sides continues to be clear and consistent.

Both world communions then jointly set up an International Working Group, which first met six months ago here at Virginia Theological Seminary and three members of which are at this conference (Bill Petersen, Michael Root and myself). We surveyed current developments across the globe, and five areas deserve special mention.

a) **Africa:** since 1992 five major Anglican-Lutheran consultations have been held. An important milestone was the 1993 Johannesburg Declaration which, among other things, pledged to undertake joint activity in certain fields – diaconia, pastoral work and mission; youth and children's work; women's work; and addressing issues of poverty and injustice [paragraph 5.1]. On the whole there is in Africa little interest in historical differences that originated in Europe or in abstract models of unity, but there are many positive signs in Tanzania, in Southern Africa (especially Namibia) and in Central Africa (especially Zimbabwe). On the ground there is co-operation over such issues as a common hymnal or liturgy, joint theological education and the pastoral care of refugees. There is widespread inter-consecrations of bishops, often on an *ad hoc* and unregulated basis. There is little difficulty about episcopacy as such. Last year an interim committee began developing a pan-African agenda, and this is the level at which any formal agreement would need to be drafted. The immediate challenge is to secure the active support of all the bishops, but little has yet been done to involve key lay leaders. The two main obstacles are the severe lack of resources and the complexity of jurisdictions.

b) **Australia:** We heard encouraging news that Anglican-Lutheran dialogue in Australia had entered a new and creative phase since 1996. Work is now well advanced on an agreed statement about 'Our Shared Christian Heritage' and on a draft 'Covenant for Mutual Recognition and Reconciliation'. This is on the lines of Meissen, but has worked out more fully the differing concepts of Office (Amt) in the church. The conciliatory tone of this material could be of real help to the Anglo-German dialogue.

c) **Brazil:** Progress was also reported from Brazil, where both Anglicans and Lutherans are strong in the south. No official agreement has yet been reached, but eucharistic sharing already happens, as do joint projects such as theological education, shared buildings and work on social issues like racism, land distribution, aboriginal peoples, etc. A bilateral commission, temporarily interrupted, is resuming its study of Porvoo, CCM and Waterloo. The two main obstacles are the shortage of resources and of documentation in Portuguese.

d) **Other areas:** In general, Anglican-Lutheran relations seem to be developing positively in Jerusalem & the Middle East, and in Hong Kong, Malaysia and Japan. The Working Group hopes to obtain reports about these regions by next March.

F. Issues of principle

Over the next three years certain issues of principle will also be claiming the attention of the International Working Group. Beside studies on the diaconate, which are already proceeding, we recognise the need to explore four other major questions:

i) evaluating the *coherence* and *consistency* between various regional dialogues;
ii) exploring what *anomalies* in church life may be tolerable within agreed limits;
iii) asking whether existing agreements can be *transferred* to other situations and entered into by new partners and, if so, how;
iv) considering what are the implications these regional concordats for the *global relations* between our two world communions.

That gives you the flavour of the major questions on which we are focussing, and your constructive comments would be of interest to us. Answers will emerge only as we have the courage to live out our ecumenical vision in practice. *Conceptualising* Full Communion is one thing, but *living it out* on a committed and continuing basis is quite another. That is precisely the challenge facing all of us as we seek to obey Christ's will & prayer 'that all may be one so that the world may believe'.

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